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1996 PRO TOUR-DALLAS COVERAGE

THE DUELIST SIDEBOARD

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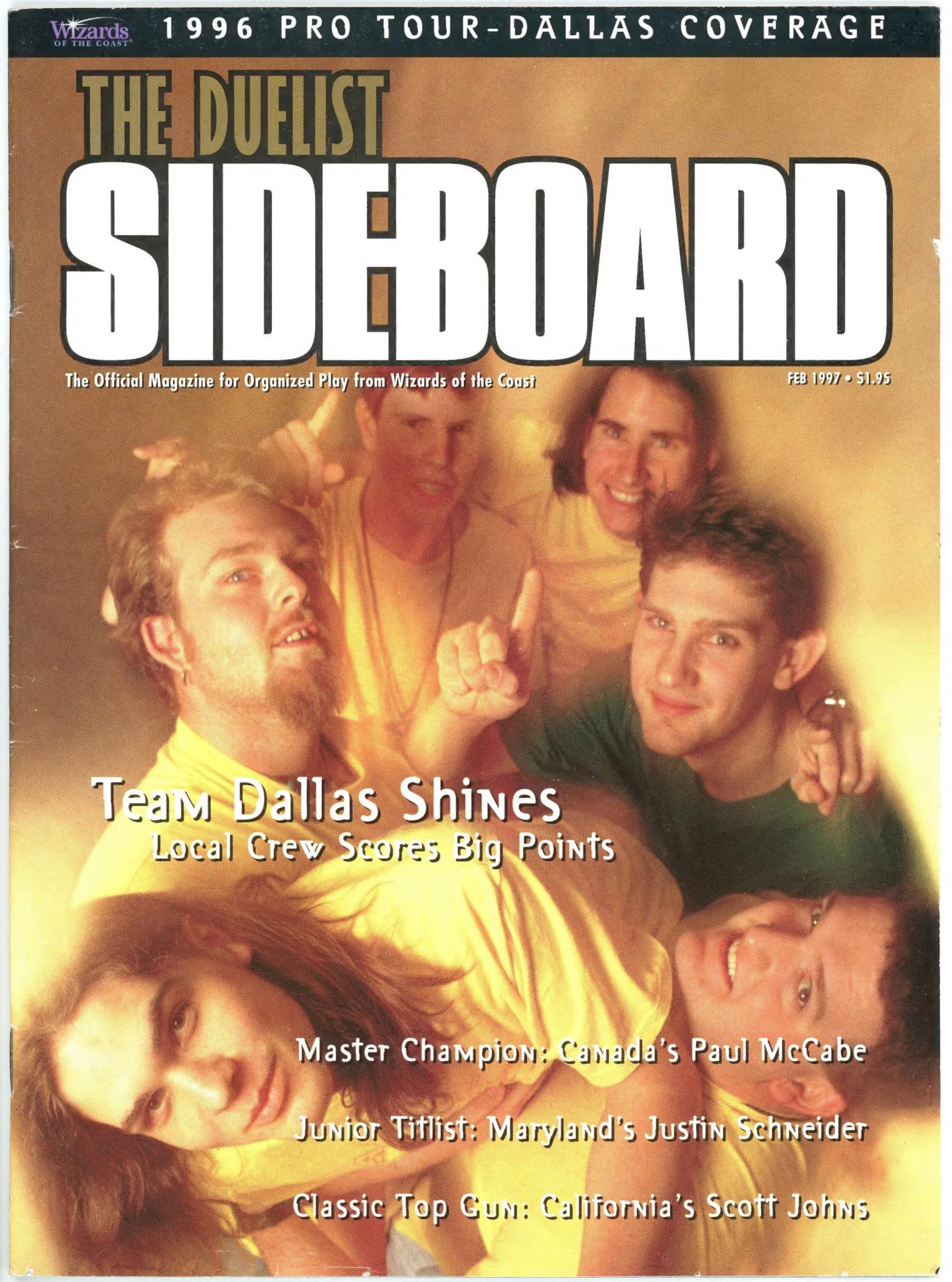

Team Dallas Shines

Local Crew Scores Big Points

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Junior Titlist: Maryland's Justin Schneider

Classic Top Gun: California's Scott Johns

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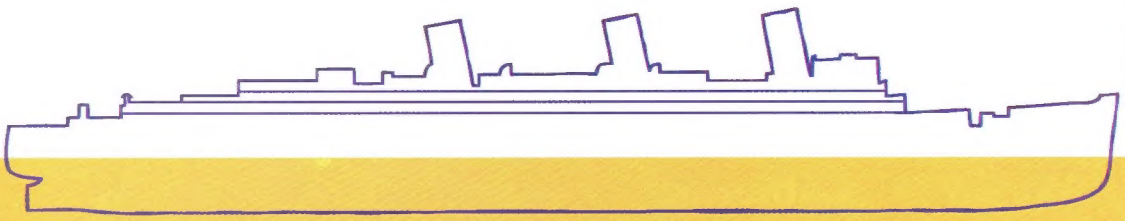

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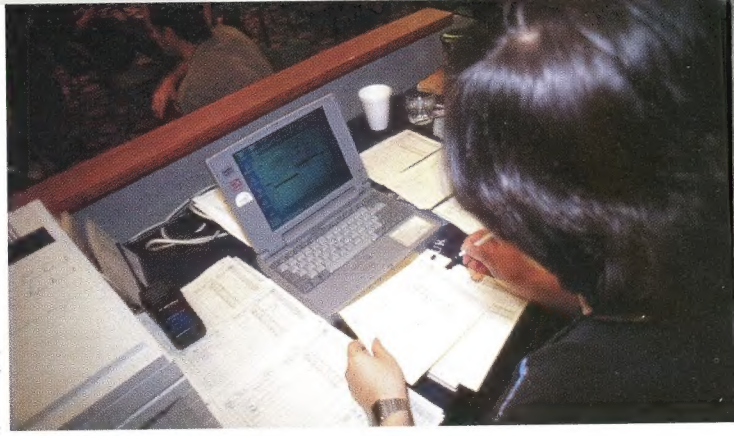
Editor's Column

Recognizing the 'Statsman'



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Most competitors on the **Magic** Pro Tour are familiar with Wizards of the Coast personnel such as Mark Rosewater (player liaison and color commentator), Andrew Finch (Tournament Director), and Tom Wylie (Head Judge). But the name Kevin Endo probably doesn't ring a bell. It's not that Endo isn't just as crucial to the smooth running of the tournaments as the aforementioned threesome. It's just that he prefers a much quieter, low-key delivery.

As the workhorse statistician at all Pro Tour events, Endo has to crunch incredible amounts of data in very short periods of time. For instance, at this year's **Magic** World Championships in Seattle, Endo had to compile score sheets on 125 players (representing twenty-eight different countries) several times each day for three days running. In Dallas, he stepped up and compiled scoring data on 242 Master-division players and 151 Juniors through nine and eight grueling rounds of Swiss-pairings play, respectively. He had approximately fifteen minutes to deliver new data (and new matchups) before the start of each round.

"That one day [Nov. 23] in Dallas, I think I was sitting in front of the computer for at least twelve hours," said Endo. "I guess I'm just thankful I don't have to do that more than once every three months or so."

A native of Vancouver, Washington, Endo graduated from the University of Washington in 1993 with a degree in economics. He presently has a sales and marketing position in Seattle-Tacoma, but still manages to work up to thirty hours every week at WotC's Tournament Center. He formerly volunteered at the center, helping to run various competitions, which is where he was discovered as a multitask, computer guru.

"My first Pro Tour event was Columbus [in July]," recalled Endo. "I think they [WotC] brought me along somewhat as a reward for all the volunteering I'd been doing at the Tournament Center. Things just parlayed from there."

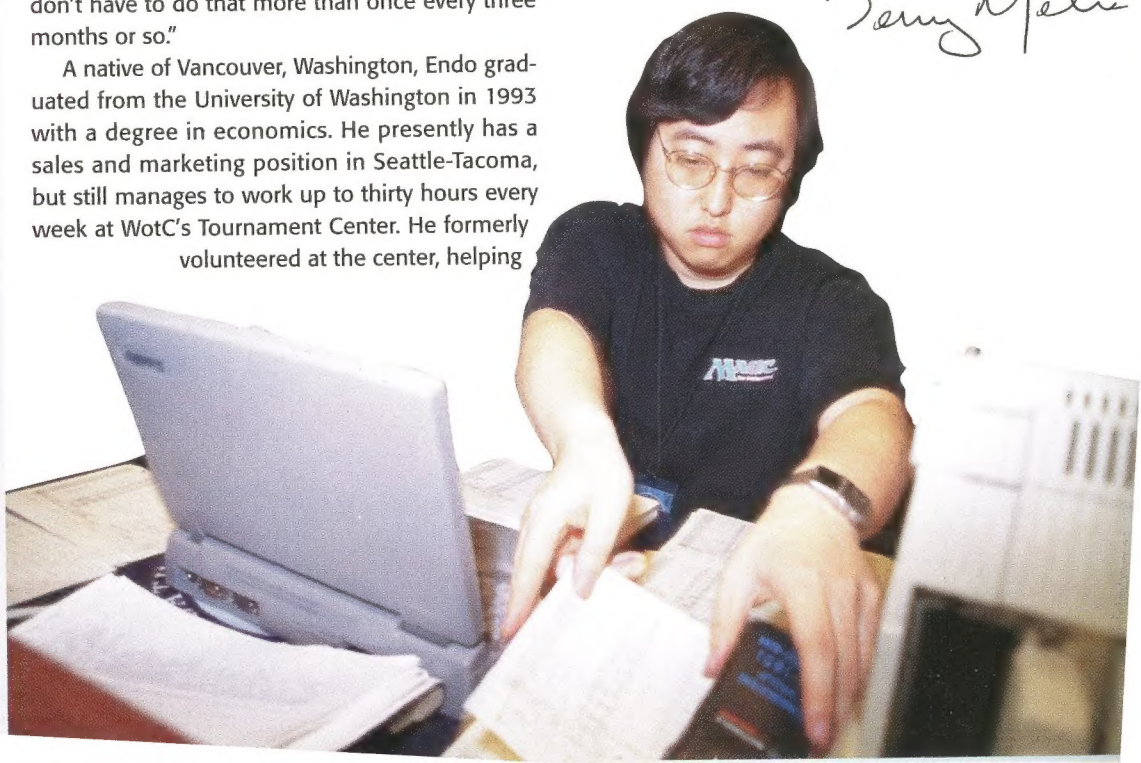
Endo's precise deciphering of information is what helps keep the Pro Tour on schedule. He's a welcome addition to a team that's constantly updating and upgrading. But what does he, personally, get out of it?

"I think just being a part of something that's important and being able to serve as an important link in getting things done, is pretty satisfying," he said.

Asked if number crunching is the toughest part of his WotC assignment, Endo said: "It's not so much that. It's more a matter of having everybody around me wanting to know everything [results, pairings, standings] immediately. That's the hard part."

A **Magic** player for two years, Endo mentioned he doesn't have too much free time to devote to outside projects these days. That's just the way we'd like to keep it.

Terry Melia



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We need you!

WotC's Looking for a Few Good Volunteers

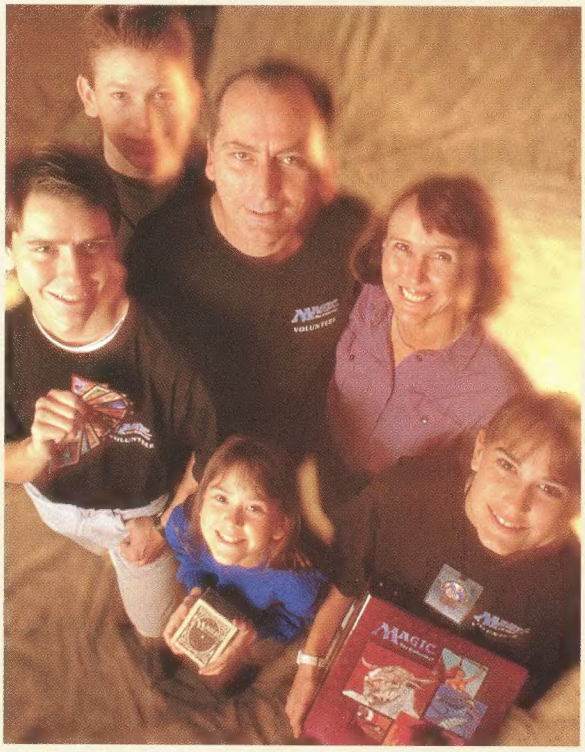
by Jeff J. Lin

What makes for a successful stop on the **Magic** Pro Tour? Top-name, top-notch **Magic** players from across the world? Tense, exciting, action-packed finals? Concession stands that offer more than just hot dogs and pretzels?

The answer is probably all of the above, but from an organizational and logistical standpoint, volunteers (judges and helpers) are key to the smooth running and success of events that produce headlines in *The Duelist Sideboard* and other **Magic** journals.

Each stop on the Pro Tour features much more than just the top-level competition—especially for non-participants. It's the tournaments and events that are open to the public that can make or break the success of an entire event.

A network of volunteers that's based locally in each city is key to a good show. So it's people like Yolanda Scott who are the behind-the-scenes linchpins for the Pro Tour stops. Scott, a 36-year-old Dallas resident, was the volunteer coordinator for Pro Tour–Dallas. On this particular day, Saturday (Nov. 23), Scott was busy on the floor in the ancillary events area, giving out staff badges, dishing out bonuses, taking care of small crises, and assigning different volunteers to various areas.



The Britton family: from top clockwise, Michael, Kevin, Judy, Elizabeth, Sarah, and Daniel.

"Even though I'm coordinating this, I was moving tables last night, putting chairs together," she said. "That's the way it works; everybody's working as a team to try and get the show going."

Volunteering and organization are nothing new for Scott, a former personnel director for the Hilton corporation. A current volunteer for the Medical City of Dallas, she's also put on many science-fiction and fantasy shows, including a million-dollar Star Trek show in Big D last year. She got involved in **Magic** through her husband, who runs local sanctioned **Magic** tournaments.

"I guess being the wife of a **Magic** player, I learned the game and got interested in what he was into," she said, "and suddenly I was drawn into it, helping him and recruiting volunteers to help us out with judging and registration and so forth."

Scott's volunteering duties began far before the eve of Pro Tour–Dallas, though. She was asked to recruit about thirty volunteers from the greater Dallas area for the event. "We went searching. We recruited at all the [**Magic**] stores, we talked to a lot of people who we thought would be pretty good at doing something as vast as this," she explained. "I think we succeeded in getting a good group."

Most of the volunteers needed at shows are judges, mainly to run many of the ancillary tournaments taking place. With enough experience, volunteer judges could be asked to help Wizards of the Coast staff run upcoming Pro Tour tournaments. "The volunteer judges are very crucial," said WotC Tournament Director Andrew Finch.

But it's not just judges who are needed. Help is also needed in the merchandise booths, information booths, registration booths, etc. For the person who wants to get involved, there are plenty of opportunities.

"Since I'm not playing, I could spectate, but it's more fun sometimes judging the event or helping to organize it. If there weren't people putting on these events, there wouldn't be times when I could play," said Tom Lang, 53, of Richardson, Texas. Lang, a database administrator for the S&A Restaurant Corporation, volunteered 33 hours during the

three days of Pro Tour–Dallas, but doesn't mind one bit. "It's sort of paying back for the times that I could play and the workers who put on those events."

Working as a volunteer judge on the Pro Tour also affords players the opportunity to watch the big names of **Magic** up close. "It's a chance for the workers to get close to the action and actually see what's working, what's not, see the personalities up close, and see how they react, so it's rewarding that way," said Lang. "In the Pro Tour, I think most people would enjoy doing that."

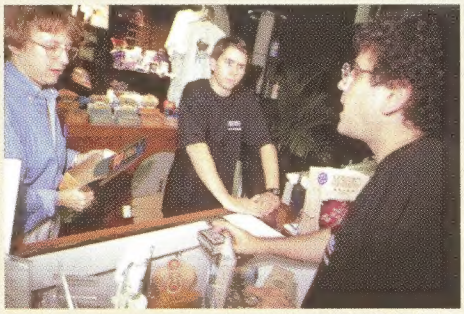
WotC doesn't let volunteers go entirely without some compensation, however. Volunteers are paid different amounts of "WotC bucks," varying on the number of hours they put in. WotC bucks can be exchanged for cards or merchandise just like real money at the WotC merchandise booth. In Dallas, volunteers occasionally also received little bonuses—extra *Mirage* decks or the limited-edition Pro Tour decks, for example.

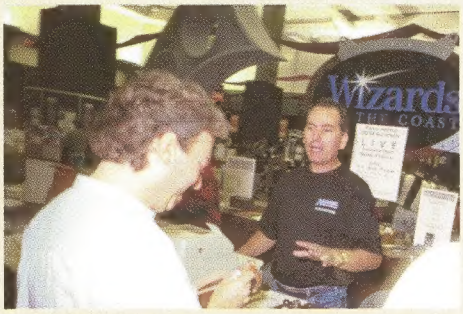
But for a lot of volunteers, the compensation is secondary. "[The bonuses and prizes] are nice, but it's a lot of fun, too," said Tim Stoltzfus, 21, from Cedar Hill, Texas.

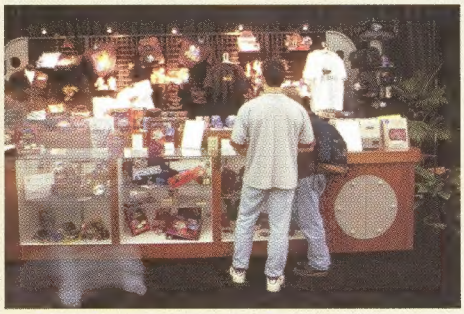
Perhaps "working" might be the wrong word. "I love it," said Stoltzfus, who competed in Dallas but got knocked out after the first day, then decided to volunteer. "**Magic** is so much fun, and getting to watch different decks and ideas is a lot of fun," he said. "I've got nothing else to do. I might as well enjoy doing this."

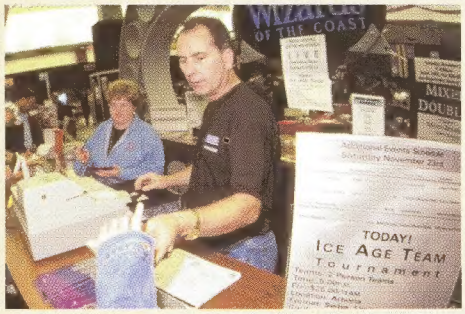
Volunteers come from all over. Kevin Britton, for instance, drove with his entire family (wife Judy and four children: Michael, Daniel, Elizabeth, and Sarah) 24 hours straight from Temacula, California, to cheer on Michael, 16, who was competing in Dallas. Once they arrived, the Brittons started volunteering their time.

Despite the exhausting trek, Britton still managed to put in nearly 40 hours in three days of volunteering at the registration booth. Son Daniel, 18, worked the cash register at the merchandise booth for 28 hours over two days. "It's fun just to be involved," said Britton, who's actually only been playing **Magic** for six months. "What advice would I give someone who's thinking about volunteering? Just show up and make yourself available. There's plenty to do."









Such dedication is common among many core volunteers. Some actually travel *just* to volunteer. Take Paul Gerardi, a computer operator for Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City, for instance. The 38-year-old has worked almost every single Pro Tour event as a judge, frequently paying his own way.

"I actually enjoy the refereeing more than I enjoy the playing," said Gerardi. "One thing is I'm a terrible player. I've always been more into the organizational side of things, so I find it a lot more fun doing this. They're sort of like little mini-vacations for me."

But most people would hardly label these outings "vacations." In fact, while he was speaking, at 1:30 A.M., Gerardi was in the midst of running a sealed-deck tournament and was scheduled to run tournaments until 8 A.M. as part of WotC's 24-hour, all-day, all-night tournament schedule. This after just having worked from 9 A.M. to 8:30 P.M.—with a bad cold, no less.

"Even though it's incredibly draining doing these for the weekend, it's really a lot of fun," he said. "It's a chance to get together with friends six times a year—and from refereeing these things you start to recognize every face that walks through the door. You can look around after doing a Pro Tour event and I can pick out a hundred faces—people that I've sat down, joked around with, had fun with. "It's definitely worth it. I get a kick out of it."

For anyone interested in volunteering at any upcoming Pro Tour events, please contact WotC Volunteer Coordinator Peggy Wasman at (206) 204-7339, or send her email at <peggyw@wizards.com>.

Johns, right, battles Shwe.

Coming Out on Top

Johns Breaks the Trend

by Jeff J. Lin

Consistency has been one of the hallmarks of Scott Johns's career on the **Magic** Pro Tour. In fact, for most of last season, you could count on Johns placing among the Top 8, with quarterfinal appearances at Pro Tour–Los Angeles (May), Pro Tour–Columbus (July), and the 1996 World Championships in Seattle (August). You could also bank on Johns losing his quarterfinal match. Not once had Johns made it to the semifinal round.

So it was hardly surprising to find him in the quarterfinals of the first-ever Pro Tour Classic (Type I) tournament on Friday (Nov. 22) in Dallas. Johns, ranked eighth heading into the quarters, faced top-ranked Tom Guevin, whom he lost to in the quarterfinals of Pro Tour–Los Angeles.

And sure enough, it looked like history was going to repeat itself. Guevin took advantage of Johns's mana problems to win the first game of the best-of-three match, and opened the third game with an incredible hand, Balancing down to two cards and no land—before Johns was able to take his first turn!

But the **Magic** gods finally smiled on Johns, for he was holding *three* Guerrilla Tactics in his opening hand—which he discarded to deliver 12 damage to Guevin. Johns then fought back to win the final two games, and more importantly, the match, advancing for the first time past the Round of 8.

"Starting with the mana hose [against Guevin] was just heartbreaking," Johns said. "Nothing against Guevin, but I already lost to him once [in Los Angeles] because I got mana screwed, and I didn't want to go through that again. This is my fourth time in the Final 8; I just wanted to win, and starting with the mana hose was just heartbreaking. It was hard to come back from that."

But come back he did, going on to beat Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz, 2–1, in the semifinals, and defeating Huei-Saint Shwe, 2–1, in the finals to win the tournament and the $11,200 first-place prize. "I finally beat the single-elimination curse," Johns said afterward. "I'm so happy."

Johns won with a deck dubbed "The Zoo," a red/white/blue/green deck which featured a lot of small creatures and direct damage. "I don't really play Type I anymore," he confessed. "I got out at the beginning of the year, so I was looking for a deck that would be relatively simple and not too difficult to play. I wanted something that would be good against Necro and would be good against control decks."

Johns, a twenty-three-year-old senior at Cal–State Northridge, said he heard about the deck through a friend, and spent three weeks modifying and playtesting it. The original version of the deck featured some countermagic and Chain Lightnings. Johns took out the counterspells and substituted Incinerates for Chain Lightnings, and added Psionic Blasts, making it more offensive.

"Especially because of the Necro [decks], I wanted to be able to deal out serious amounts of damage in a relatively quick order," he said. "I also based the deck more around a recursion theme; I had two blue Tutors that helped me recur after I emptied out my hand, and I also added Diminishing Returns, which I know is kind of funky for Type I.

"The strategy—unless you're playing a deck with lots of creatures—is to get your hand down to the point where in one turn you can get rid of any extra cards, so that if I draw Wheel [of Fortune], Timetwister, the Tutors, or any of the recursion, I can immediately dump off a card and go right into it and gain all the card advantage back."

The final match was an all-Zoo affair, as Shwe was also playing a Zoo deck—but with countermagic and Stormbind. Johns and Shwe had met in the final round of the Swiss but didn't play each other, instead opting for an intentional draw to secure spots in the Final 8.

Unlike some previous Pro Tour finals, the games of this final match were action-packed, as creatures, Light-

ning Bolts, Incinerates, and other forms of damage flew back and forth across the table. Shwe won the first game by throwing down Incinerate and two Lightning Bolts while both players stood at 8 life; Johns took the second game by finishing off Shwe with a Lightning Bolt and three Incinerates in succession.

Johns grabbed the advantage in the third and deciding game—despite Shwe's early Stormbind—when he cast Balance with one card in his hand and sacrificed all his lands to his Zuran Orb. He was able to leave Savannah Lions on the board, and hit Shwe a couple times, knocking him down to 6 life.

"I thought I could pull it out," said Shwe, "but then he drew two Strip Mines." Johns stripped enough of Shwe's blue mana that he was unable to cast the Counterspell he'd been holding the whole game. Johns then cast Wheel of Fortune. "I wasn't able to counter Wheel [of Fortune] and it turned out to be really bad," said Shwe. Fittingly, Johns won the game and the match with Incinerate.

Shwe, a twenty-two-year-old UCLA graduate, has been playing the Zoo deck for about two-and-a-half years. "I designed it back then because I didn't have all the Moxes and stuff, and I wanted to build a deck that's really hard to mana screw."

The deck served Shwe well, getting him past Paul Ferker 2–0 in the quarterfinals, and past New York's Sean Fleischman in the semifinals. For his runner-up finish, Shwe received $6,900—not bad, considering this was his first Pro Tour competition.

Though the Classic tournament was a prelude to the main Pro Tour event—the two-day Standard (Type II) affair—it drew ninety-five players, including many of the big names on the Pro Tour circuit. The $40,000 purse, while not quite the $150,000 awaiting the winners of the Standard competition, was substantial enough to generate professional-level intensity through the seven preliminary rounds of Swiss.

Though the debate about whether Classic play is more about skill than luck still rages on, even the winners were aware of their good fortune. "Classic is a lot of fun," said Johns. "I had a great time most of the day, but it's tough to really take seriously for me, because some draws are just so heinous."

"For me, **Magic**'s about designing the deck, then you just play what you draw," said Shwe. "As long as you don't make mistakes, fate decides what you do."

dallas classic (type 1) championships 11.22.96

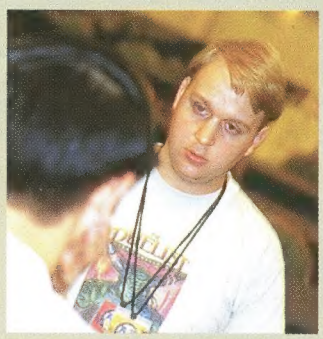
PLACE	PRIZE $	NAME	HOMETOWN	AGE	PLACE	PRIZE $	NAME	HOMETOWN	AGE
Champion	$11,200	Scott Johns	Northridge, CA	23	49		Ted Stanulis	Ann Arbor, MI	25
Finalist	$6,900	Huei-Saint Shwe	Sunnyvale, CA	22	50		Scott Holman	Gatlinburg, TN	28
Semifinalist	$3,850	Sean Fleischman	Bronx, NY	26	51		Erik Lauer	Pittsburgh, PA	29
Semifinalist	$3,850	Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz	Brooklyn, NY	16	52		Tony Tsai	Ithica, NY	20
Quarterfinalist	$2,250	Paul Ferker	Philadelphia, PA	29	53		Michael Loconto	Grafton, MA	27
Quarterfinalist	$2,250	Thomas Guevin	Nashua, NH	23	54		Scott Schilz	Lakewood, CO	27
Quarterfinalist	$2,250	Jeffrey Kuta	Oakland, CA	26	55		Michael Katz	Rochester, NY	21
Quarterfinalist	$2,250	Shane Cargilo	Mission Viejo, CA	22	56		Bryan Crawford	Whitby, Canada	18
9	$650	Rudy Edwards	Fayetteville, NC	22	57		Clint Whaley	Knoxville, TN	27
10	$650	Darwin Kastle	Allston, MA	25	58		Henry Johnson	San Luis Opispo, CA	17
11	$650	Matt Place	Kansas City, MO	21	59		Robert Kline	Kingsport, TN	23
12	$650	Mark Chalice	Claremont, CA	24	60		Van Russell	Hazel Green, AL	15
13	$650	Joel Unger	Santa Barbara, CA	26	61		Marc Allie	Springfield, MO	22
14	$650	John Chinnock	Summit, NJ	25	62		John Hoftyzer	Springfield, MO	20
15	$650	Koby Kennison	Navarre, FL	19	63		Alex McConnell	Tallahassee, FL	22
16	$650	James McGovern	Middle Village, NY	32	64		Peter Guevin	Nashua, NH	24
17		Thomas Andersson	Täby, Sweden	26	65		Michael Nickoloff	Los Angeles, CA	20
18		Johan Disenborg	Tyresö, Sweden	23	66		Jon Finkel	New Brunswick, NJ	18
19		Michael Donovan	Robertsville, MO	30	67		Alex Baranosky	Newport, RI	16
20		Igor Frayman	Los Angeles, CA	23	68		Ray Fucillo	Abington, MA	18
21		Jason Gordon	Fairfield, CT	16	69		Eric Kirkman	Denver, CO	27
22		Mark Justice	Salt Lake City, UT	25	70		Bryce Currence	Claremont, CA	20
23		Michael Dove	Los Angeles, CA	25	71		Patrick Woo	Corvallis, OR	26
24		Michael Pustilnik	Brooklyn, NY	31	72		David Strunk Jr.	Stanton, CA	14
25		David Adams	Chesterfield, VA	20	73		Keri Mulinix	Irvine, CA	27
26		Max Suver	Seattle, WA	16	74		Alan Finney	Springfield, TN	15
27		James Zazula	Thunder Bay, Canada	24	75		Jason Arnold	Huntsville, AL	24
28		John Slaughter	Charlottesville, VA	24	76		Greg Mosley	Lincoln Park, MI	16
29		Andrew Wills	Ann Arbor, MI	24	77		Shannon Hill	Lubbock, TX	28
30		Scott Essex	Rochester, NY	20	78		Ryan Eaton	Cookeville, TN	22
31		Eric Taylor	Ann Arbor, MI	35	79		Adam Hunt	North Benton, OH	24
32		Patrick Albro	Rochester, NY	24	80		John Song	Ferndale, MI	28
33		Chris Otwell	Colorado Springs, CO	23	81		Danny Broyles	Lubbock, TX	26
34		Shane Knepshield	Aurora, CO	17	82		Javier Garavito	Kent, WA	25
35		Donald Gallitz	Fredericksburg, VA	23	83		Kent Bridge	Norman, OK	26
36		Thierry Dallacroce	Calabasas, CA	25	84		Charlie Ramirez	Whittier, CA	21
37		George Ngo	Los Angeles, CA	22	85		Gregory Wheat	Ingleside, IL	27
38		Kent McClard	Goleta, CA	29	86		Michael Schulte	Simi Valley, CA	24
39		Brian Weissman	Santa Barbara, CA	22	87		Russ Smith	Englewood, CO	41
40		Biren Amin	Laurel, MD	28	88		David Parr	Dallas, TX	33
41		James Lemire	Shrewsbury, MA	27	89		Leon Lindbäck	Stockholm, Sweden	21
42		Chad Hastaba	Brooklyn, NY	22	90		Merlin Hayes	Bennet, NE	49
43		Michael Long	Harrisonburg, VA	21	91		Dave Alexander	Nashville, TN	16
44		Don Mayhew	Lincoln, NE	27	92		Phong Huynh	Grand Prairie, TX	24
45		Aziz Al-Doory	Tallahassee, FL	21	93		Joe Oxford	Oklahoma City, OK	29
46		Adam Green	Nashua, NH	21	94		Gabe Higa	Lancaster, CA	24
47		Justin Serulneck	Pittsburgh, PA	20	95		Anthony Ramirez	N. Richland Hills, TX	23
48		Jason Page	Arlington, TX	19					

Breaking the Jinx

Scott Johns

(Classic Champion)

The name Scott Johns is becoming more and more familiar to *Duelist Sideboard* readers. Before Pro Tour–Dallas, the twenty-three-year-old Northridge, California resident had made it to more Pro Tour quarterfinal rounds than any other player in history, but always fell in the first round of single elimination. This time around, however, he broke the jinx and walked away with the top prize of $11,000.



Johns noted that he used to play Classic (Type I) exclusively, but that at the start of this year he found he liked Standard (Type II) better because of the variety of deck types. Classic at that time, according to Johns, seemed to have only two viable decks. He soon switched to playing Standard, and hadn't played Classic for quite some time when it came time to prepare for Dallas. He checked to see which deck types had been doing well, and his curiosity was piqued in something called the "Zoo" deck, which Californian George Ngo had been playing at some Costa Mesa tournaments. Johns didn't have a decklist for it, but built his own version of it and dubbed it the "Turbo/Zoo."

"I wanted a deck that could beat Necropotence, especially after sideboarding, and one that could give a really good game to control decks—especially *before* sideboarding," said Johns. "The presence of four Black Vices is really nice against the Necrodecks. The ability with two blue Mystical Tutors and all the recursion to fill my hand back up after any Hymn to Tourachs is really important. Mana problems become nonexistent because everything costs one; this is attractive because of my history with mana problems. If I get one land, I can play this deck."

Outside of **Magic**, Johns is finishing his undergraduate studies in music (he plays trombone) at Cal State Northridge and starting on some courses for his Masters degree in conducting. He admits, however, that **Magic** is taking up most of his life these days. In addition to playtesting, which takes two-to-three hours a day, he spends time designing decks on paper or even "just sitting down, closing my eyes, and thinking." He's also writing a book for Wordware Publishing in Dallas analyzing *Mirage* cards from a tournament player's viewpoint.

"And then of course, when I can, I try to squeeze in time with my fiancee," said Johns, smiling. "But it's tough. We tend to play a lot of sealed deck together. Sealed deck has [actually] saved our relationship!"

Huei-Saint Shwe

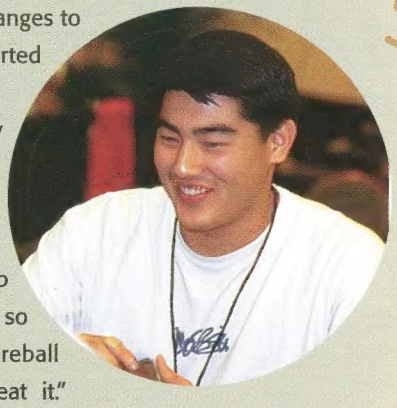
(Classic Finalist)

Unlike Johns, Huei-Saint Shwe had never competed at a Pro Tour event before. Though he's been playing **Magic** for more than two years—and has done well in many local tournaments—he had never participated in an event of this magnitude. Regardless, he rose to the occasion during Friday's Classic battle and finished second, earning $6,900 for his efforts.

Shwe graduated from UCLA last spring with a degree in microbiology, then moved back to Sunnyvale, California. He's twenty-two years old and currently seeks a job in a biotech lab. In the meantime, he's helping out his parents' business as an assistant manager, doing administrative, tax, and accounting work.

Shwe, like Johns, played another version of the "Zoo" deck. Unlike the others who adopted this deck, however, Shwe didn't get it from anyone else; it's the deck he invented himself following the first tournament he ever played in, and it's been evolving ever since. At his first tournament, he played a blue/white control deck, and lost in a hurry. He subsequently built the Zoo deck to meet several criteria: it had to be able to operate on two mana; be able to kill any of its own creatures that were stolen by Control Magic; and it had to be able to take advantage of an opponent's mana shortage.

"The other thing I didn't like about blue/white was, every time somebody else got manahosed, I couldn't beat [him or her] right away. With the Zoo deck, if my opponents get manahosed, they're gonna lose. I'll beat them in like three or four turns."



Shwe's made many changes to his deck since he first started playing with it.

"The deck was originally designed around first-turn Channel/Fireball," he explained. "Then I added all the quick cards to help me get the life advantage so whenever the Channel/Fireball combo came up I could beat it."

Each new set of DCI restrictions and bannings forced Shwe to periodically modify his deck; and, of course, he has added new cards from each expansion when they complemented his deck design. Shwe eagerly awaits his next opportunity to visit the "Zoo."

by Beth Moursund

Scott Johns (Classic Champion)

Scott Johns's deck, as well as those of the other top three players, was reminiscent of the deck types employed by the French during the '94 **Magic** World Championships: quick, fluid, and deadly.

Kird Apes and Savannah Lions frequently made first-turn appearances, drawing direct damage away from Johns. Against more control-oriented decks, these critters often dealt 8 to 10 damage before Moat or The Abyss could be summoned, luring an opponent within direct-damage range.

Gorilla Shamans gave card advantage when successfully cast, due in part to its hatred of low–casting-cost artifacts easily broken the turn Gorilla Shamans is summoned. Moxes, Zuran Orbs, and Ivory Towers felt the wrath of Gorilla Shamans on more than one occasion in Dallas.

Black Vises allowed Johns to keep control decks in check, along with a good heap of direct damage. Recursion (Timetwister and Diminishing Returns) allowed him to replenish his library, handsize, and attack.

Johns found himself on a couple of occasions using *Mirage*'s Mystical Tutor to fetch Disenchant to help deal with a troublesome Moat his Zoo couldn't swim. Mystical Tutor was also useful in sending Swords to Plowshares to help remove a problem critter summoned by an opponent.

Instrumental over the course of the tournament were Johns's three sideboarded Meekstones. Often overlooked cards in today's Classic play, Meekstones helped Johns hold off Serendib Efreets and Erhnam Djinns during several key matchups.

Other sideboard cards that came in big for Johns were his four Guerrilla Tactics. These gave him the advantage against other burn decks, as well as the surprising amount of Necro/Discard decks employed during the tournament.

Huei-Saint Shwe (Classic Finalist)

Huei-Saint Shwe's five-color deck, while very similar to Johns's deck, had an added flavor (Dwarven Miner) one could call quirky; the true sign of a Huei-Saint Shwe creation.

Dwarven Miner allowed Shwe to keep one opponent below three lands during two crucial games. Sylvan Library allowed him to check out upcoming cards and Stormbind allowed for extra damage-dealing potential. Yet the one characteristic that set his deck apart was his employment of two Counterspells and two Arcane Denials.

"The countermagic was actually very instrumental in beating a lot of decks...especially against those players who didn't think I had countermagic," said Shwe. They usually relied on one or two cards to try and stop my onslaught (i.e., Moat, Fireball, Balance, Zuran Orb) and they would try and cast these later in the game. When I countered their attempts, their mouths usually dropped open as they had just lost the match!"

A peek at Shwe's sideboard revealed the most varied configuration in the tournament. Fifteen cards strong, it proved to be versatile during times of need. A consecrated City of Brass allowed Shwe to cast eighty percent of his spells against those decks employing land destruction. Ray of Command helped against large creature decks. And the strangest sideboard card of the tournament, Healing Salve, helped against red burn decks as a counterspell for Lightning Bolts. Shwe mentioned the Salve as being, "better than Reverse Damage and Circle of Protection: Red because it can protect my creatures, and if my opponent or I cast Wheel of Fortune or Timetwister, I can cast [Healing Salve] to gain 3 life."

A Day at the Classic Zoo

analysis by
Jack Lewis Stanton

Sean Fleischman; Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz (Classic Semifinalists)

Sporting one of the lowest land ratios in Dallas (eighteen, five of them colorless), this creation of O'Mahoney-Schwartz and Fleischman managed its mana surprisingly well. This can only be attributed to the strong players playing the deck.

Though their deck resembled Johns's deck in many respects, the differences can be found in its creature base and mana structure. Hard to kill via direct damage, the Serendib Efreets and Erhnam Djinns of the O'Mahoney-Schwartz/Fleischman deck proved invaluable over the course of the competition. While the deck lacked certain land-type mana, it more than made up for it by employing all five Moxes, Sol Ring, and Black Lotus. This quick mana often allowed for first-turn Efreets and Djinns.

The deck's interesting sideboard cards included four Birds of Paradise. Said O'Mahoney-Schwartz, "The four Birds were the coolest part of the sideboard. One of the deck's main weaknesses was land destruction. The deck itself doesn't have a lot of land, so Birds of Paradise and extra land made the deck more flexible when need be. I would have lost two rounds if I didn't have Birds of Paradise."

top 2 decklists

SCOTT JOHNS

1 Ancestral Recall
1 Balance
1 Black Lotus
4 Black Vise
1 Diminishing Returns
1 Disenchant
2 Gorilla Shaman
4 Incinerate
2 Kird Ape
4 Lightning Bolt
1 Mox Pearl
1 Mox Ruby
2 Mystical Tutor
3 Psionic Blast
1 Regrowth
4 Savannah Lions
1 Swords to Plowshares
1 Time Walk
1 Timetwister
1 Wheel of Fortune

Land
3 City of Brass
1 Library of Alexandria
3 Plateau
2 Savannah
4 Strip Mine
2 Taiga
2 Tropical Island
1 Tundra
3 Volcanic Island

Sideboard
2 Disenchant
1 Gorilla Shaman
4 Guerrilla Tactics
3 Meekstone
4 Whirling Dervish
1 Zuran Orb

HUEI-SAINT SHWE

1 Ancestral Recall
2 Arcane Denial
1 Black Lotus
2 Black Vise
3 Chain Lightning
2 Counterspell
1 Demonic Tutor
2 Disenchant
1 Dwarven Miner
2 Gorilla Shaman
2 Incinerate
4 Kird Ape
4 Lightning Bolt
1 Mox Pearl
1 Mox Ruby
1 Mystical Tutor
1 Regrowth
4 Savannah Lions
1 Stormbind
1 Swords to Plowshares
1 Sylvan Library
1 Time Walk
1 Timetwister
1 Wheel of Fortune

Land
4 City of Brass
2 Mishra's Factory
2 Savannah
1 Soldevi Excavations
4 Strip Mine
4 Taiga
3 Tundra
1 Underground Sea
3 Volcanic Island

Sideboard
1 Consecrate Land
1 Disenchant
1 Energy Flux
1 Guerrilla Tactics
1 Hammer of Bogardan
1 Healing Salve
1 Hydroblast
1 Psychic Purge
2 Pyroblast
1 Ray of Command
1 Sand Golem
1 Swords to Plowshares
1 Whirling Dervish
1 Zuran Orb

To Play or Not to Play?

by Lisa Stevens

Moxes...The Big Blue...Juzam Djinn...Black Lotus...the list goes on and on. The Classic format—better known as Type I—has built up an almost mythical perception in the minds of **Magic** players. Thousand-dollar decks are the norm in this environment and woe to the player who doesn't have the big power cards.

Since the inception of the Standard (Type II) rules, much debate has surfaced as to the future of the Classic format. Many players felt that Wizards of the Coast had forgotten and, indeed, tried to bury the original tournament style of play by not supporting it fully. This year, they pointed to the total lack of Classic support at the Pro Tour level as proof. So, at Pro Tour–Dallas, WotC sponsored its first major Classic tournament. With a cash purse totaling $40,000, it was sure to bring out the best Classic players in the world.

The Duelist Sideboard thought this would pose the perfect opportunity to pick the brains of some of the best Classic players around to find out what they thought of the current Classic environment and what its future may be in competitive play.

What better place to start our survey than with California's Brian Weissman, one of the most famous Classic players and the creator of "The Deck." When asked about the future of the Classic format, Weissman felt that we were "beating a dead horse."

"In the early days of **Magic**, the Type I cards allowed you to explore many concepts in deck building by providing a catalyst to 'grease' the decks and make them viable. You would see much more innovation and interesting design," explained Weissman. "However, as the DCI switched its focus to Type II, the Type I format was neglected. The designers took great care to make sure cards weren't unbalancing in the Type II environments while obviously not giving much thought to Type I. This has led to a tournament environment which has a trend toward 'hoser decks' and playing the metagame rather than innovation and pioneering new deck designs."

New Hampshire's Tom Guevin (from Team SMK) would tend to disagree. "I don't think that Type I is as crazy or out of control as most people think. It isn't all luck," he said. "Sure there are luck cards involved, but there are balances to every luck card."

When asked whether the format should exist on the Pro Tour level, Guevin said, "I think people find it very exciting to watch. Just the number of things that can happen in a turn and the games are over so fast. You see so few matches that are long and dragged out as you do in Sealed Deck or Type II. Since ninety-nine percent of the people playing **Magic** don't have the cards they need to compete in Type I, it's pretty much purely spectator sport. But in terms of long-term viability on the Pro Tour, I can't see it being there because it's not really indicative of the best player per se."

Guevin suggested that WotC stage a large event once a year, like the one held in Dallas, for "the old yokels, the Zak Dolans of the world" to get a chance to dust off their Classic decks and play.

Shawn Davies from Canada added, "In my opinion, Type I, for the most part, is dead. This is about the only place [at a Pro

(continued on page 12)

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Brian Weissman: creator of "The Deck."

(continued from page 10)

Tour event] where people will actually play Type I. The number of players who have the Type I cards is greatly reduced and spread out around the world."

For one final opinion, we sought out the Classic champion from Pro Tour–Dallas, Scott Johns of Northridge, California. As he munched away on a much-earned dinner, he said, "I know this sounds kind of funny because I just won the Type I, but I got out of Type I around the beginning of the year and the reason I did was because I found that there were only a couple of decks that were really viable, either aggressive black/discard/land destruction or mana-drain decks.

"The problem was that I was kind of stifled in deck building and I really like to play different decks. So I got into Type II because there was so much variety. I mean there were millions of different decks. But then, around the time of the Necro craze, I felt the same thoughts creeping into my mind about Type II. So then I started getting disgusted with Type II and right at that point, the Mana Crypt thing started, so suddenly Type I had a lot of interesting decks again.

"I think Type I is really interesting from a deck-building standpoint because it seems that you can build a deck around almost anything you want. The problem is that there are some cards in Type I that are so abusive. In particular I think that Library [of Alexandria] and Mirror [Universe] are just head-and-shoulders above everything else. They used to come up every now and again, but now the Tutor action from *Mirage* really makes it too abusive. I found a lot of games that I watched today were decided by [Mystic Tutor]. My deck relied on using the Tutor to get the abusive cards such as Ancestral Recall or Timetwister. So that is the problem I have with Type I right now; not only can you play with the abusive cards, but you can pretty much get them any time you want. I guess the challenge is to mix all the good cards together with a deck that also works if you don't get the Tutors."

So where does Classic go from here? The consensus seems to be that while the format is mostly dead, it still has a unique, exciting, fast, and dangerous appeal that shouldn't be ignored. It provides a chance for some of the top players in the world to dust off their power decks and also gives a chance for many players to see these cards in play.

A chance, if you will, for football fans to see Vince Lombardi's Packers play, or for hoop fans to witness Wilt Chamberlain dunking a basketball. After all, these are the cards that made **Magic** famous. Trot them out once a year for the spectacle of it—but don't wear out the novelty.

"...as the DCI switched its focus to Type II, the Type I format was neglected. The designers took great care to make sure cards weren't unbalancing in the Type II environments while obviously not giving much thought to Type I."

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Wizards OF THE COAST

Preparing for Dallas

Team Mishra's Left No

by Peter Radonjic

With the restriction of Strip Mine and Hymn to Tourach, and the arrival of *Mirage,* the Standard (Type II) tournament scene had the potential to be shaken up like never before. What new power decks will appear? What old decks will die? These were the questions facing professional players as they readied themselves for Pro Tour–Dallas, perhaps the most eagerly awaited Pro Tour event yet.

Myself, Canadian National Team member Terry Lau, Pro Tour regulars Ryan Fuller, Terry Tsang, Uri Margalit, Thomas Girard (a Junior competitor), and Pro Tour rookie Jim Hillis all comprised Team Mishra's. Well, we set out to answer the question of which decks to play in Big D.

Choosing the appropriate deck to play is extremely important because the deck-to-deck matchup is so critical. Even though your deck may slaughter everything but Necrodecks, if at the tournament, eighty percent of the players play Necro, it is the wrong deck to play. I cannot stress how important it is to play the right deck—if you play the proper deck and have a suitable sideboard, you've already won a few matches before the tournament even begins. So the other questions we set out to answer had to do with the "metagame": What are the other professional players going to learn through playtesting? And what decks will they play as a result?

The decks we chose to play were dictated by the breakdown of what we thought the rest of the field would play.

Our first thought regarding the restriction of Hymn to Tourach and Strip Mine was that the balance of power would shift toward control decks. Also, Mishra's Factory, Kjeldoran Outpost, and other special lands would be more prevalent, so every deck would have to have some form of land control. Not necessarily land-destruction spells, mind you, but some way of dealing with them, such as Stasis or Winter Orbs.

With these general thoughts in mind we began playtesting in mid-October, first trying out the so-called power decks: Necro, Turbo/Stasis, Erhnageddon, and the various red/green and red/green/white "Erhnam and burn 'em" decks. Then we went through each card in *Mirage* and looked at its potential to have a deck built around it and its ability to help an existing deck.

We were very careful when building and testing our decks not to fall into the trap other playtesting teams often do. The tendency is to modify your deck and sideboard to perform better against the decks your friends are playing and not what the field is playing. We kept this in mind as we experimented with everything: pure Necro; Necro/Bolt; Necro with blue for Energy Fluxes; Necro land destruction; Necro-weenie with Bone Harvests; Turbo/Stasis; Erhnageddon; "Erhnam and burn 'em"; various Winter Orb decks with Deadly Insects and with Titania's Song; the "Prison"; white-weenie; "Turbo/Balance"; and various "good-stuff" decks.

We tried decks based around *Mirage* cards—Forsaken Wastes and Hammer of Bogardan seeming to be the only viable cards for Standard decks. *Mirage* looked like it was there only to augment the Standard decks. The Hammer deck we didn't give much of a chance because we thought

a lot of people in Dallas would use Winter Orbs and Armageddons. We even briefly tried "Maro-geddon" decks, also without success; none of these decks could consistently beat Necro and Turbo/Stasis.

As we flew into Dallas, we concluded the playing field would be divided. As is true in almost any new environment, we expected to see a wide variety of decks and figured that no more than fifteen to twenty percent of the field would be playing a certain deck type. So that narrowed it down to two decks for us: Necro and Turbo/Stasis, the only decks that could consistently win in the wildly varied environment we expected to see.

Without having the experience necessary to play Turbo/Stasis optimally, I chose to play the Necro-control deck with—as suggested by Fuller and Girard—Infernal Darkness as a lock card and to give my deck a viable chance to win game 1 against any Turbo/Stasis decks I might face. Lau and Hillis also chose to play similar Necrodecks. Tsang added in City of Brass and Balance to the Necrodeck, with Stench of Decay in the sideboard. Fuller and Girard both played the Enlightened Tutor version of the Turbo/Stasis deck, with a couple Barbed Sextants in the sideboard to combat Infernal Darkness. Margalit decided to go his own way and play the Lightning Bolt/Adarkar Wastes/Wildfire Emissary deck that we also felt could be strong.

Photos by Rex Rystedt

board. Everything in my sideboard had primary and secondary uses, Lake of the Dead especially. Critical for Necro to beat Winter Orb, they—along with the Soul Burn and Drain Life—were also key in beating burn decks and other Necrodecks. The sideboard was frequently the difference in the matches I played.

So how did we do? Well, it appeared we "metagamed" accurately. The diverse environment we anticipated was certainly present. No deck was even close to dominant, it was about as evenly spread as any tournament I'd played in before. For example, I played against a Winter Orb "Prison" deck; two Necrodecks (one with blue for Energy Flux); a standard Erhnageddon; a red/green/white Wildfire Emissary "anti-Necro" deck; one Turbo/Stasis; one mono-green, speed-creature deck; the "Sligh" deck off the Internet, a mono-red, Ironclaw Orc/Lightning Bolt monstrosity; and a blue/red Hammer of Bogardan deck with Lightning Bolts, Counterspells, and Wildfire Emissaries.

With my deck and sideboard, I was ready for all of them—even against the mono-green which ran over me anyway. I missed qualifying for the Top 8 by virtue of tiebreakers, finishing in tenth place out of 242 competitors with a 7–2 record following the nine rounds of Swiss. I was crushed by the mono-green, and just plain lost to the black-blue Necrodeck. Lau finished at 6–3, Fuller at 5–3–1, Hillis at 5–4, Girard at 4–3–1, Margalit at 4–5, and Tsang at 2–7. After the event, even though as a whole we didn't "rock the **Magic** world," we wouldn't have changed the decks we played.

Personally, I can't wait for Paris, the Pro Tour's next Constructed event!

Standard Deck Untested

The Necrodeck that I played was designed specifically for Pro Tour–Dallas and the varied environment we expected. Here goes, the "Canadian-style" Necrodeck:

2 Contagion	3 Stupor
4 Dark Ritual	1 Zuran Orb
4 Drain Life	19 Swamp
2 Demonic Consultation	
1 Hymn to Tourach	**SIDEBOARD**
4 Hypnotic Specter	
2 Ihsan's Shade	2 Contagion
1 Infernal Darkness	1 Dark Banishing
1 Ivory Tower	4 Dystopia
3 Mishra's Factory	1 Gloom
3 Necropotence	3 Infernal Darkness
4 Nevinyrral's Disk	2 Lake of the Dead
3 Order of the Ebon Hand	1 Necropotence
2 Serrated Arrows	1 Soul Burn
1 Strip Mine	

I selected every card in my deck and sideboard because of its multiple applications. Serrated Arrows pushed the odds in my favor against any protection from black "pump-knight" decks I would face, and they are so generally useful they were more effective in the main deck than in the side-

Pro Tour–Dallas Heats Up Despite Unexpected Ice Storm

Individual Type II Competition Recap

by Terry Melia

The Dallas-Forth Worth Lakes Hilton in Grapevine, Texas, is situated approximately ten minutes from the DFW Airport (via shuttle), and what seemed to be an eternity from any place else. And when a two-day ice storm trickled through town in late November—postponing flights and making taxi cabs a rarity—one certainly needed to keep entertained inside the hotel. This was no problem, however, for **Magic** aficionados.

From Friday, November 22, which marked the twenty-third anniversary of JFK's assassination in Dallas, through Sunday, November 24, some five hundred **Magic** fanatics attending Pro Tour–Dallas ignored the inclement weather outside—evoking memories of Pro Tour–New York's blizzard last February—and played in countless tournaments inside. The top-draw events included a $40,000 Classic (Type I) championship; a $150,000 Standard (Type II) Master event; and a $60,000 Standard Junior (eighteen and under) championship, marking the largest scholarship payout in **Magic** history. These three major-money affairs were run while countless "ancillary" events were being staged in the hotel's lower level, making Pro Tour–Dallas a **Magic** lover's paradise.

"Community is tremendously significant in **Magic**, especially as far as tournaments go," said Mike Long of Centreville, Virginia, a twenty-one-year-old competitor. "Personally, without a strong community, I cannot win a game. I don't have fun unless I'm around my friends."

MacKenzie Patterson, Jr. of Carmel, California, the eldest player on site at fifty-five, added: "I don't think it's the prizes that motivate people to come here; I think it's the glory. I think the one thing I've learned is that there's a tremendous amount of diversity at these events, a number of different winning decks. I think Wizards [of the Coast] has done the one thing they'd really hoped to do and that's to create a sufficiently complex and extensive card mix that's really balanced the game."

The Standard (Type II) battle at Pro Tour–Dallas marked the largest single pool of **Magic** cards ever available for one tournament. For the record, the following seven sets were allowed in play: *Fallen Empires, Ice Age, Homelands, Alliances, Mirage, Chronicles,* and *Fourth Edition.* Though the DCI has changed the definition of Standard play—as of January 1, 1997—to include just the basic set, the most recent stand-alone expansion, and the last two limited-edition expansions, the old definition of Standard still stuck in Dallas. A total of 242 Master-division participants—representing countries including Japan, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, England, The Czech Republic, and Denmark—along with 151 Junior-division players, battled through nine and eight rounds of Swiss-style play, respectively.

Following Saturday's Master-division fight, eight players emerged as quarterfinalists: Brian Hacker (8–1) of San Diego, California; Jason Zila (7–1–1) of Huntington Beach, California; Chris Pikula (7–1–1) of Chesterton, Indiana; Robert Thornburg (7–1–1) of Las Cruces, New Mexico; Paul McCabe (7–1–1) of Toronto, Canada; George Baxter (7–1–1) of Dallas, Texas; Peer Kröger (7–1–1) of Hamburg,

Germany; and Olle Råde (7–2) of Göteborg, Sweden. Following Sunday's championship round, McCabe, a nineteen-year-old engineering student, found himself sitting atop the field. A two-time runner-up at previous Pro Tour events, McCabe, using a slightly tweaked Necrodeck in Dallas, finally broke his bridesmaid string.

"I was starting to wonder if I was destined to always finish second," he said, moments after sweeping Zila, 3–0, in the finals. "It really feels good to finally win one of these things." *(For details on McCabe's championship performance, see page 19.)* For his efforts, McCabe won $26,000. Zila, who's just sixteen years old and competed

with a straight-white deck, earned $16,000. *(For details on Zila's play, turn to page 20.)*

Pro Tour–Dallas's eighteen-and-under Junior division, meanwhile, sported the largest collection of teens (151) ever assembled for one Pro Tour outing. In the Junior finals, fifteen-year-old Justin Schneider of Lutherville, Maryland, outlasted sixteen-year-old Dallas local Jeremy Baca, 3–2. For his winning combination, Schneider earned a $16,000 scholarship; Baca, meanwhile, came away with $10,000 in scholarship winnings. *(See related stories on both players on pages 32–33.)*

Overall, of the Top 32 Master-division decks and Top 8 Junior decks played at Dallas, the most-frequently used card (not counting basic lands) was Strip Mine (which appeared in 39 decks). The remaining top ten cards went as follows: Zuran Orb (36); Mishra's Factory (28); Black Vise (22); Serrated Arrows (22); Ivory Tower (21); Balance (20); Disenchant (19); Thawing Glaciers (18); and Swords to Plowshares (17).

Throughout the first year of the Pro Tour, the level of competitive **Magic** play has vastly improved. Master-division quarterfinalist George Baxter offered this observation: "If you look at the level of the decks that were played at Pro Tour–New York and compare them to the level of the decks here, I think these decks would crush them. Granted, some of these decks had Land Tax and some restricted and obnoxious cards, but if you played those decks under the same type of restrictions against these decks, they'd get crushed."

The next stop on the **Magic** Pro Tour will be Los Angeles, California, February 28 to March 2, aboard the majestic Queen Mary ocean-liner. Master and Junior participants will compete in a Limited (Rochester Draft: *Mirage* and *Visions*) environment with a combined purse of $180,000 in cash and scholarship prizes: $150,000 Masters; $30,000 Juniors.

The remainder of the 1996-97 Pro Tour season includes Paris, France, in April; New York City in June; and the 1997 **Magic** World Championships in Seattle, Washington, in August. Next fall, brace yourself for Chicago in September and Germany in November!

MASTER DIVISION (Standard) RESULTS
Dallas, Texas (November 23–24,1996)

PLACE	ROUND	NAME	HOMETOWN	AGE
Quarterfinalist				

Third Time's the Charm

by Terry Melia

Paul McCabe is no stranger to the **Magic** Pro Tour. In fact, he's not only familiar with its competitive level of play, but also with the thrill of qualifying for the prestigious Round of 8. A participant in all five Pro Tour events, he's reached the championship round a total of three times (twice as a Junior, once as a Master competitor).

His first two visits to the finals—at Los Angeles last May and Columbus in July—produced runner-up finishes. His stellar play in Dallas, however, earned him top billing. The big difference this time around: competing as a Master.

"The field was actually quite strong," McCabe mentioned, moments after beating New Mexico's Robert Thornburg, 2–0, in the quarterfinals. "There was a real variety of deck types here. I noticed a lot of black, but I didn't really see that there was an incredible amount of actual Necropotence."

McCabe, an engineering student at the University of Toronto, turned nineteen on the first day of Standard play at Pro Tour–Dallas (Nov. 23). He earned his belated birthday gift of $26,000 a day later by completely dominating the competition. His deck recipe: standard Necro, with a twist. Unlike a usual Necrodeck, his black combination held no weenies and sported just seven creatures total. It did, however, possess plenty of creature destruction: two Serrated Arrows, three Contagions, four Nevinyrral's Disks, and four Drain Lifes.

"The night before the first day [of competition], we did a lot of playtesting and basically nothing we came up with worked, so I just grabbed a deck off the shelf," said McCabe.

After ousting Thornburg, McCabe, the fifth seed entering Day 2, locked horns with top-seeded Brian Hacker of San Diego. Hacker, using a "fake Necro" deck *(see page 16)*, went undefeated during day 1's Swiss-style tournament. Nevertheless, McCabe blasted him, 3–0, to vault into his third championship finals.

"There was a lot of luck involved actually," offered McCabe, following the semifinal sweep. "The first game was a good game, it was fairly close. My deck just persevered. He put out a lot of creatures early, but I managed to kill them, then win with Drain Life.

"I was expecting a tougher match, though I thought that my deck could beat him. I had a lot of creature destruction and big creatures, which he had a tough time dealing with."

Entering the finals against sixteen-year-old upstart Jason Zila of California, McCabe had experience on his side, but past history rearing its ugly head. Besides that, his mind set didn't exactly exude confidence.

"I think I've got a really tough matchup," said McCabe. "He's got a deck [a defensive, straight-white weenie] that's basically designed to beat mine. I could pull it out, but I think he has the advantage going in."

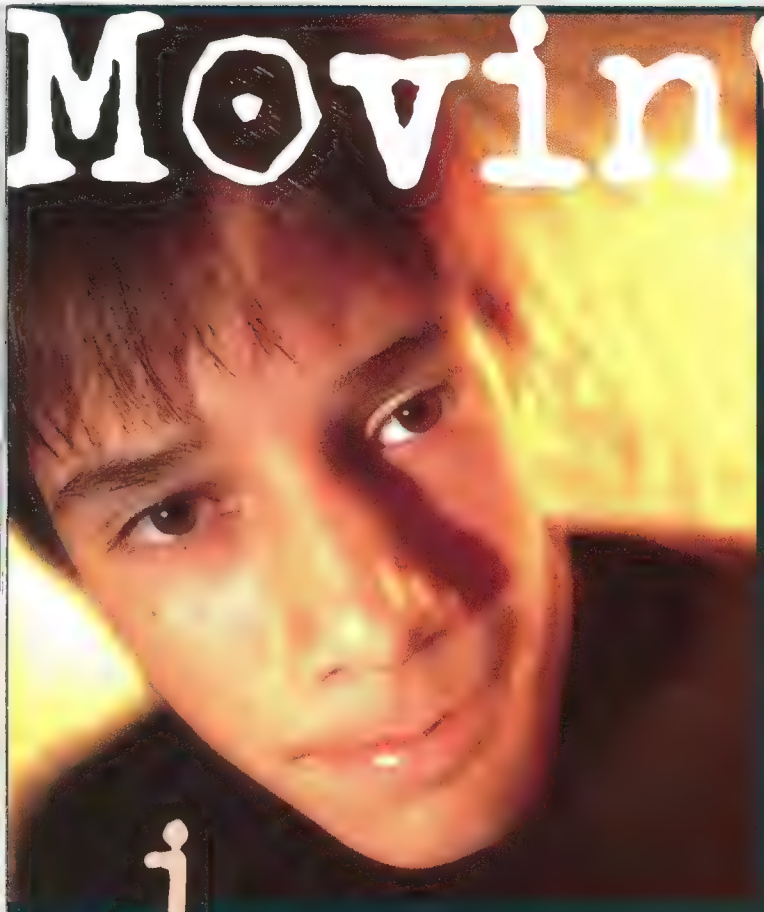
When play commenced, however, McCabe's deck shined. Duplicating his semifinal effort, McCabe swept Zila in three straight games.

"I went in there thinking, for sure, that he was just gonna control me with Winter Orbs. I had even practiced against his deck—well, actually, it was against [Junior Champion] Justin Schneider's deck—and it just dominated me," said McCabe. "But my cards did hurt him. He already had a deck that wasn't too efficient, card-wise, and so I just outdrew him in two of the games. He couldn't do much as a result."

Besides being a terrific **Magic** player, McCabe is also a generous partner. He shares all his winnings with Toronto buddy Eric Tam, the 1995 Canadian National Champion, with whom he routinely playtests varying deck designs. Since the Pro Tour began, McCabe has won nearly $30,000 in cash and another $10,500 in scholarship money. Tam, meanwhile, has won $11,400 so far.

"Like they say," said Tam, "two heads are better than one."

Movin' On Up



"I played in the Juniors [tournament] a while ago and didn't really like it. And I knew a couple of my other Junior friends were going up, so I said, 'Sure I'll go up.'

Jason Zila is not someone you'd necessarily expect to find playing in the Master-division finals at a **Magic** Pro Tour event. It's not his playing ability that raises eyebrows, it's his age. He's just sixteen years young. Despite his youthfulness, he gained widespread respect in a hurry from **Magic** players young and old, by virtue of his gutsy showing at Pro Tour–Dallas.

A junior at Edison High School in Huntington Beach, California, he's been playing **Magic** for two years. To prepare for Pro Tour–Dallas, he playtested with some of Southern California's best players, including Mario Robaina of the famed Pacific Coast Legends crew.

"I played a lot with Mario," said Zila. "We were the ones that came up with the deck I used. It's totally defensive. I've only got two cards that I can kill someone with—one [Black] Vice and one [Kjeldoran] Outpost. I'm not sure why I didn't wind up having more draws than I did, so I guess it worked out well."

Zila used a basically straight-white deck. "Its purpose is just to lock down an opponent's mana," he said.

Following Saturday's nine rounds of Swiss-pairings, Zila, posting a 7–1–1 record, found himself seeded No. 2 heading into Sunday's best-of-three quarterfinals.

"It was rough," said Zila of the Master-division field. "I played a lot of strong people. There was a lot of Necro and, basically, the one deck I did not want to play against was blue/white. They've got more counters than me, so they can easily deck me.

"I think I was lucky the first day, though, 'cause I only played against one blue/white [deck] and I was able to deck my opponent. I still don't know how I did it."

In the quarterfinals, Zila squared off against 1996 German National Champion Peer Kröger. Despite his opponent's impressive billing, Zila swept the twenty-one-year-old German in two straight games. He followed that performance with a 3–0 blanking of Indiana's Chris Pikula, also twenty-one, in the semifinals. The latter match produced a lopsided outcome even Zila couldn't have predicted.

"I was expecting so much more," he said. "In the first game, I didn't know it but he was mana-screwed big time. And usually, in the first game, I have no chance against a Necrodeck. But since he was mana screwed so bad, that helped out a lot. So I was able to win game 1, which is always the big one.

Similar victories followed in games 2 and 3, catapulting Zila into the finals against Toronto's Paul McCabe. Here is where Zila's luck ended, however. McCabe coasted to the winner's circle with a 3–0 decision.

Zila mentioned he prefers playing Constructed over Sealed Deck any day. "And I practiced a lot for this tournament. I think that's why I did so well," he said.

Asked why, at age sixteen, he chose to play in the Master division, Zila answered: "I played in the Juniors [tournament] a while ago and didn't really like it. And I knew a couple of my other Junior friends were going up, so I said, 'Sure I'll go up.'

"And you know, you never really know what to expect when you're playing against Juniors because you never know what [deck] the person is going to be playing. But when you're playing with the Masters, there are all these key decks. And I'm learning a lot more as a result."

Zila, who enjoys studying mathematics, has evidently absorbed quite a bit of knowledge. For his outstanding performance in Dallas, he took home $16,000 in prize money. Not bad for a kid's first Pro Tour dance with the big boys.

by Terry Melia

Maybe Next Time

by Jeff J. Lin

brian hacker

That old saying about one man's trash is another man's treasure couldn't be more true for semifinalist Brian Hacker.

Hacker, a twenty-two-year-old English literature student at UC–San Diego, brought the basic design for a deck he wanted to use at Pro Tour–Dallas. The deck, at its core a black weenie with Bad Moons (and Erg Raiders!), had originally contained Sengir Vampires and Tombstone Stairwells. "I took the deck [from San Diego] as we had configured it to [Dallas]," he said. "As we playtested, it became evident it needed Choking Sands more than it needed Sengir Vampires."

But where do you go for four Choking Sands, late the night before the opening round of the tournament? The answer: downstairs in the ancillary events area, where sealed-deck tournaments were running all day and all night.

"We rifled through the garbage at 3 A.M. looking for Choking Sands," Hacker said. "We found three, and I needed four, so my friend John Yoo said, 'Hey, I've got this one sealed deck I haven't opened.' He opened it up, and there was the fourth Choking Sands."

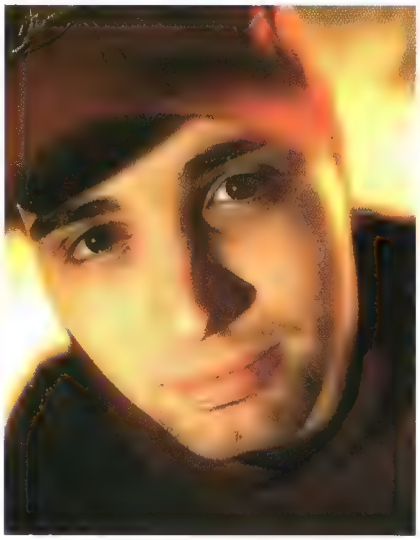
That kind of luck held up for Hacker through the nine rounds of Swiss the first day to finish at 8–1, the best record of the day.

Hacker's deck also contained Necropotence, which he used "only to refill my hand if someone killed all my creatures." Even more useful than that, however, was the fact that many opponents were fooled into thinking Hacker was playing a traditional Necropotence deck.

"I would try to get my opponents to think I was playing traditional Necro," he said. "Some people sideboarded traditional anti-Necro cards that just don't work against me—it's more like a white-weenie deck, a hack-and-slash type of thing."

Hacker was able to beat Olle Råde, 2–0, in the semifinals, but against eventual champion Paul McCabe, a risk he had taken—running only twenty-one lands in a sixty-card deck—came back to haunt him. He was unable to get two swamps on the board in either the second or third game, and lost the match, 3–0.

"I expected to lose a couple games throughout the tournament due to mana hosing," Hacker said. "It never happened until the Final 4, when it happened in two of the three games."



They say good luck runs in streaks. For Chris Pikula, his luck ran through the first day of the tournament and all the way up until the semifinals.

The twenty-one-year-old senior at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) had decided on playing a black/red Necrodeck. The deck held a lot of red—four Lightning Bolts, three Incinerates, Fireball, and Shatter. "I wanted to play a fast deck and Necro's strong," he said. "I hate control decks in pro tourneys because I don't want to go to a big tournament and lose because of time limits. That bothers me." Interestingly, the deck contained no *Mirage* cards.

Throughout the first day, Pikula had mostly favorable matchups, managing to avoid most anti-Necro obstacles. "[The first day] I never had Circle of Protection: Black played against me. I had one Serrated Arrows played against me and two Wrath of Gods [played against me] the whole day."

The day of the quarterfinals, however, Pikula's luck ran out. Though he made it past George Baxter in the quarterfinals, 2–1, he ran into eventual champion Jason Zila in the semis. All the anti-Necro countermeasures that Pikula had dodged the first day seemed to catch up in his match against Zila.

After a close first game which went Zila's way, Pikula's impending fortune became evident. "The second game I got a good draw. I Dark Ritualed out Necropotence on the first turn; he played [Black] Vise. I couldn't do anything and he ended up Mystical Tutoring for an Enlightened Tutor, and Enlightened Tutoring for a Karma.

"The third game I didn't think he could possibly also have CoP: Black, because he had Armageddons and Winter Orbs," Pikula said. "Well, he played CoP: Black and Armageddons. I lost.

"His deck was the most anti-Necro deck I've ever seen."

Pikula has been playing well lately; his semifinalist showing was an improvement over his performance at Pro Tour–Atlanta, where he was knocked out in the quarterfinals. "I'm hoping to get in the Top 2 next time," he said. "That's the plan right now."

chris pikula

Close but No Cigar

Robert Thornburg If you were young enough to qualify for either the Junior or Master division of the Pro Tour, which would you prefer? Robert Thornburg's answer may surprise you. A seventeen-year-old from Las Cruces, New Mexico, he opted to compete in the Master division because, "I thought it was going to be easier," he said.

Say that again?

I figured the players under eighteen who are really good would play in the Junior division, and if I played in the Masters, that eliminated a lot of them," he said. "I think they're the best players out there, the players to beat.

"The results from Pro Tour–Columbus are what led me to believe that," he said. "I looked at the decks in the two divisions and I thought the Junior decks were better."

It ended up being the right decision: Thornburg edged out a huge field to make it to the quarterfinals, where he lost to eventual champion Paul McCabe, 2–0. Ironically, this was only McCabe's second tournament in the Master division; he didn't turn nineteen until November 23.

Thornburg's all-black deck used small, fast creatures and disruption in the form of Icequakes, Painful Memories, and Hypnotic Specters. "I used the Specters as bait to draw creature elimination from my Sewer Rats," Thornburg confided. "Sewer Rats was really cool [during the first day]. It dealt the main damage almost all the time."

Peer Kröger Sometimes you need to let the environment dictate what kind of deck you play. In Peer Kröger's case, that meant playing a deck he didn't really like, but it was a decision that paid off.

"I didn't know what to play until the player meeting [the night before the competition]," said the twenty-one-year-old student from Hamburg, Germany. "At the player meeting they said there would be ten rounds of Swiss, one hour each. If I would have played a more defensive deck, I would have been tired after seven rounds, so I decided to play a straight-on white weenie, where the games don't last that long and I don't have to think that much.

"I usually hate that kind of deck," he added. "I prefer more defensive decks."

Though the deck got him through the first day and into the quarters, it petered out against eventual finalist Jason Zila, who swept him 2–0. "He had an anti-weenie deck with a lot of artifact mana, Winter Orbs, Icy Manipulators, and especially Serrated Arrows," Kröger said.

Kröger, who attends Hamburg University, is the current German National Champion. Despite his quarterfinal exit, he was glad to improve on his last Pro Tour finish, which was 76th at the '96 World Championships.

With the high finish, Kröger is looking forward to the next Pro Tour event in Los Angeles, California, at the end of February. "I'm looking forward to L.A. I prefer to play Sealed Deck anyway."

by Jeff J. Lin

Olle Råde. Olle Råde is starting to become a fixture in the final rounds of Pro Tour events. Råde, the 1995-96 Pro Tour Player of the Year, added the quarterfinalist's prize of $5,500 to his considerable **Magic** winnings for the year.

One would expect the Player of the Year to come up with a better method than rolling the dice to decide which deck to play, but that's exactly what he did.

The seventeen-year-old Swede played a blue/red Hammer of Bogardan deck, which featured direct damage (including the Hammer, of course) and countermagic, with Thawing Glaciers. "It's kind of a classical Swedish deck. Hammer of Bogardan and Thawing Glaciers is such a good combo," he said.

But Råde intended to play a Necrodeck originally. "At first I was going to play Necro, but I only had two Headstones (1 : "Remove from the game target card in any graveyard. Draw a card at the beginning of the next turn's upkeep."), and I knew Necro would lose to Hammer of Bogardan if an opponent got it going [without Headstones]. So me and a friend rolled a dice for them. He won, so I said, 'Okay, I'll go for blue/red.'"

It was fortunate for Råde. His friend, Sven Runing, didn't fare as well, finishing 132nd. Råde lost 2–0 to Brian Hacker in the quarterfinals. The pair had played earlier during the Swiss rounds, with Hacker taking that win as well.

Råde will have plenty of time to prepare for Los Angeles since he is currently taking a year off from school to concentrate on **Magic**.

George Baxter. It's a good thing George Baxter has such an easy-going personality. A higher-strung player might have hurt him or herself for committing the same clerical mistake Baxter did, a mistake that might have cost him his quarterfinal match.

The twenty-four-year-old resident of Dallas wrote down his deck incorrectly. He forgot to record a last-minute swap of a Feldon's Cane and a Kjeldoran Outpost between his sideboard and his main deck. It wasn't caught until after the end of the Swiss rounds, so Baxter had to enter his best-of-three quarterfinal match against Chris Pikula with an automatic loss. "Death by incompetence," he sighed.

Though he was able to win the first game, Baxter was unable to prevail in a close second game, which gave Pikula the victory, 2–1.

"I'm not upset about it at all, though," said Baxter. "I mean, to get so far again, it feels good. Top 8 is fine for me."

Baxter, who organized Team Dallas, was playing the famous Dallas deck, jokingly dubbed the "White Trash Deck" or "Trailer Park Deck." The deck was similar in principle to the Titania's Song deck that carried him to the finals of the '96 U.S. National Championships, and was developed jointly by Baxter and fellow Pro Tour regular Shawn "Hammer" Regnier. It locked up an opponent's mana sources and won mainly with Kjeldoran Outpost. All members of Team Dallas played with the deck, most of whom finished respectably.

This was not the first time an incorrect decklist cost the twenty-four-year-old; at Pro Tour–Los Angeles last May he forgot to write down Fireball on his decklist, which cost him placement in the Top 8. "It's going to be a legend thing," he joked. "George Baxter, the guy who just can't write down his deck right."

Dallas Master-Division Decks

by Beth Moursund

Paul McCabe (Champion)

To someone who watched one of McCabe's games in Dallas, his deck might have appeared to be a standard Necrodeck. Looks can be deceiving, however. The traditional Necrodeck is a weenie/discard deck, often with land destruction. McCabe's deck, however, had no weenies. In fact, it had only seven creatures total: four Hypnotic Specters, two Sengir Vampires, and one Ihsan's Shade. McCabe said he originally made the deck to be funny, and put in cards that he thought were terrible—but incredibly, he found that it kept winning.

McCabe's deck used the Necropotence/Nevinyrral's Disk combination and discard tactics to gain card advantage. Three Contagions and one Serrated Arrows, plus more in the sideboard, kept him from being hurt too badly by last-creature nukes. The deck owed much of its success to Lake of the Dead, which he could use to bring out a Vampire or Ihsan's Shade in the beginning of the game or after an opponent's Armageddon, or help fuel a devastating Drain Life later.

Jason Zila (Finalist); George Baxter (Quarterfinalist)

Both Zila and Baxter played decks based on the Icy Manipulator/Winter Orb combination. The goal of these decks was to reach a state where the player had Winter Orb and at least one Icy Manipulator in play, along with some artifact mana sources, while the opponent sported no untapped land. Armageddons helped the player achieve this goal, while Wrath of God, Swords to Plowshares, and Serrated Arrows kept the opponent's creatures down. The player could use Icy Manipulator to then tap whichever land untaps each turn. Two Icy Manipulators in this situation form a nearly complete lock, since they can tap a newly played land as well. If necessary, Icy Manipulator could also be used to tap Winter Orb, allowing the lock-deck's player to untap all his or her own land. Players usually win with both of these decks, even if they only get the one-Icy Manipulator part of the lock working.

Zila's version of the deck was white and blue. "I knew that Swords of Innocence would screw me over, so I added four Arcane Denials and one Mystical Tutor for blue." The blue also allowed him to sideboard Political Trickery, which was extremely valuable against other decks with Kjeldoran Outposts. He had only two sources of damage: Kjeldoran Outpost and Black Vise. He won many of his duels by library depletion, even without Millstones.

Baxter's version was designed by himself and Shawn "Hammer" Regnier, and was played by all of Baxter's Team Dallas mates. He gave most of the deck's credit to Hammer. Baxter's group named the deck "White Trash," but many of the other players at the tournament were calling it the "Dallas deck." It contained more damage sources than Zila's deck, stocking four Kjeldoran Outposts and four Mishra's Factories, along with Black Vise. An error in writing down the deck, however, forced Baxter to play with only three Outposts and forfeit his first game in the finals.

Brian Hacker (Semifinalist)

Using his deck, Hacker went undefeated through the entire Swiss-pairings portion of the tournament. Several players described Hacker's deck as a "fake Necro." Hacker said, "It's not even really Necro at all. I mean, it has two Necros straight, but the deck rarely won off the Necropotence card advantage. It works more like a white-weenie deck with very little defense; but in this case, instead of having the white creatures with Swords to Plowshares and Disenchant to cover them, it has Bad Moon and the Dark Ritual for speed. If an opponent gets a poor draw, the deck works fast enough that [he or she] doesn't really have a chance to recover.

"If I fear that someone can do a lot of direct damage or if I'm thinking that we might get into a race, like against a white-weenie deck or a burn deck, I sideboard out all the Necropotence parts other than Drain Life."

Many players sneer at Erg Raiders, but Hacker finds the card a true complement. "The 3 toughness makes it very difficult for another Necro player to deal with. Also, if you have Bad Moon in play, Erg Raiders is bolt-proof."

Chris Pikula (Semifinalist)

Pikula played another variation on the Necrodeck, adding red for direct damage and artifact destruction. He called it "suicide Necro" because he had no Nevinyrral's Disks. Pikula designed the deck together with Worth Wolfport. Unlike most of the Necro players at Dallas, he didn't use Stupor. "Originally we only had four Lightning Bolts, a couple Shatters, and one Fireball," he said. "We were playing with Stupor, and I decided that Stupor is terrible. So one day I just took out the Stupors and put in four Incinerates, and from there the deck was awesome.

"A lot of Necro players have trouble with white-weenie decks. I love white-weenie decks. I crushed two of them today." His major worry was blue/white decks with Circle of Protections and counterspells; most of his sideboard was geared toward coping with them.

Robert Thornburg (Quarterfinalist)

For the last few months, black has become almost synonymous with Necro on the Standard (Type II) tournament circuit. Thornburg's deck came as quite a surprise. It combined fast, cheap creatures with land

destruction and hand destruction—and no Necropotence. Aeolipiles and Contagions helped clear the way for his creatures if he faced another fast-creature deck; slower decks fell victim to the disruptive effects of mana loss and hand-stripping, while the fast creatures chewed them up. The most underestimated card in the deck was Sewer Rats.

"Nobody expected Sewer Rats," said Thornburg. "It comes out so fast and it kills big creatures. It can kill Nettletooth Djinns and Wildfire Emissaries. Usually Hypnotic Specters draws creature elimination, and Sewer Rats kills them."

Peer Kröger (Quarterfinalist)

Kröger's deck began like a straightforward white weenie, featuring the usual Knights and Savannah Lions backed up by Mishra's Factories and Kjeldoran Outposts. Kröger departed from the typical weenie deck, though, by including three Icy Manipulators and two Serrated Arrows. These higher-cost spells slowed the deck just a bit compared to a pure weenie deck, but gave it more staying power and allowed the weenies to hold up against larger creatures. He also took the unusual step of including four Disenchants in his main deck, rather than starting with half of them in his sideboard as is more common. The gamble seemed to pay off well as Kröger found plenty of targets for his Disenchants in the Dallas environment.

Oddly, Kröger said that he hates Necrodecks and weenies. He chose this deck after hearing at the player meeting that the tournament would probably be ten rounds of Swiss. "I thought it would be a very long and hard day, so I decided not to play a more strategic type of deck."

Olle Råde (Quarterfinalist)

A bright splash of color among the mostly black-and-white decks in the Top 8, Råde's deck stood out from the crowd. Råde described it as "a red/blue deck that builds on counterspells and wins with Hammer of Bogardans and Fireballs and Control Magics. It's kind of a classic Swedish deck."

He did, however, make one concession to the white crowd: four City of Brasses allowed him to add one Balance to the mix. The deck depended heavily on Thawing Glaciers to get extra land into play. If he could get enough mana to start recycling Hammer of Bogardan, he would usually win. Råde said that the deck loses horribly to Winter Orb decks, but does extremely well against Necro.

TOP 4 STANDARD DECKLISTS

Paul McCabe
3 Contagion
4 Dark Ritual
4 Drain Life
1 Hymn to Tourach
4 Hypnotic Specter
1 Ihsan's Shade
1 Ivory Tower
2 Lake of the Dead
2 Mind Warp
4 Necropotence
4 Nevinyrral's Disk
2 Sengir Vampire
1 Serrated Arrows
3 Stupor
1 Zuran Orb

Land
2 Mishra's Factory
1 Strip Mine
18 Swamp

Sideboard
1 Contagion
4 Dystopia
3 Infernal Darkness
1 Lodestone Bauble
1 Serrated Arrows
1 Soul Burn
3 Stench of Decay
1 Stupor

Jason Zila
4 Arcane Denial
2 Armageddon
1 Balance
1 Black Vise
4 Disenchant
1 Enlightened Tutor
1 Feldon's Cane
4 Icy Manipulator
1 Land Tax
3 Marble Diamond
1 Mystical Tutor
2 Serrated Arrows
1 Sky Diamond
4 Swords to Plowshares
3 Winter Orb
3 Wrath of God
1 Zuran Orb

Land
4 Adarkar Wastes
3 City of Brass
3 Island
1 Kjeldoran Outpost
10 Plains
1 Strip Mine
2 Thawing Glaciers

Sideboard
2 Circle of Protection: Black
3 Divine Offering
1 Hurkul's Recall
2 Hydroblast
2 Jester's Cap
1 Karma
1 Kjeldoran Outpost
2 Political Trickery
1 Serrated Arrows

Brian Hacker
4 Bad Moon
4 Black Knight
4 Choking Sands
2 Contagion
3 Dark Ritual
1 Drain Life
3 Erg Raiders
1 Hymn to Tourach
4 Hypnotic Specter
4 Knight of Stromgald
2 Necropotence
1 Nevinyrral's Disk
4 Order of the Ebon Hand
2 Terror

Land
4 Mishra's Factory
1 Strip Mine
16 Swamp

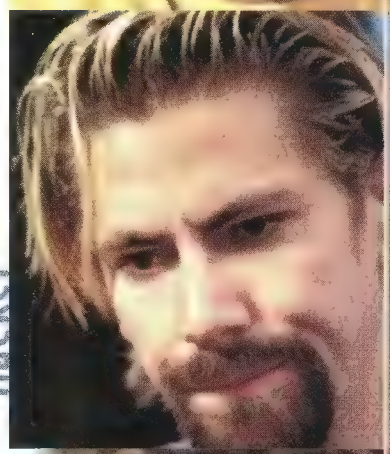
Sideboard
1 Black Vise
2 Contagion
2 Demonic Consultation
4 Dystopia
2 Gloom
2 Infernal Darkness
1 Necropotence
1 Zuran Orb

Chris Pikula
4 Black Knight
1 Black Vise
4 Dark Ritual
3 Drain Life
1 Fireball
1 Hymn to Tourach
4 Hypnotic Specter
3 Incinerate
2 Knight of Stromgald
4 Lightning Bolt
3 Necropotence
4 Order of the Ebon Hand
2 Shatter
1 Zuran Orb

Land
1 City of Brass
1 Lava Tubes
4 Mountain
1 Strip Mine
4 Sulfurous Springs
12 Swamp

Sideboard
4 Anarchy
4 Dystopia
1 Infernal Darkness
1 Ivory Tower
1 Necropotence
2 Pyroblast
1 Shatter

baxter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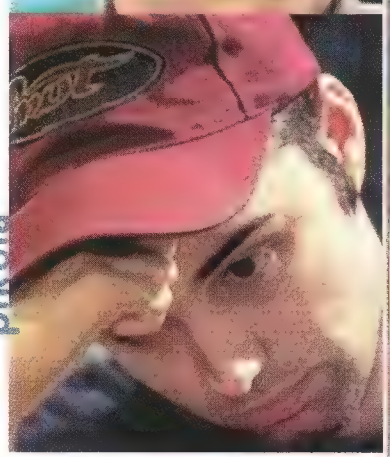
kröger


pikula

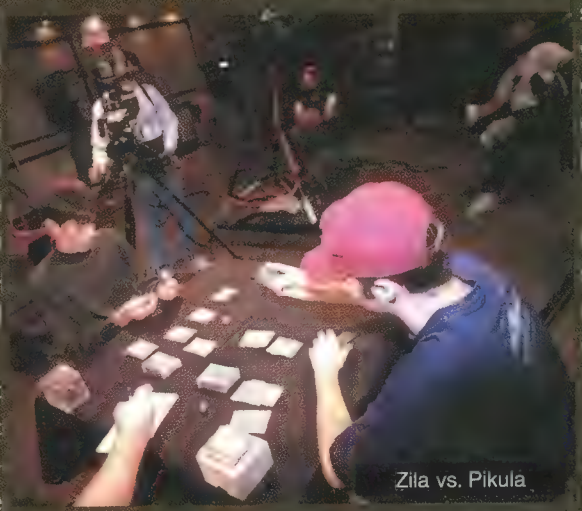
"...I love white-weenie decks. I crushed two of them today."
–chris pikula

Tips from

During Pro Tour–Dallas, *The Duelist Sideboard* asked many of the top Classic (Type I) and Standard (Type II) players their thoughts on the keys to their individual decks' successes, the impact of *Mirage* on the tournament scene, and what the DCI restrictions—beginning January 1, 1997—would mean to the Standard environment.

We began by asking the competitors what they thought was the key to their decks' success. Scott Johns of Northridge, California, the winner of the Classic tournament, attributed his success to playing the "metagame" well.

"The 'Zoo deck,' by its very nature, does well against Necro and Necro was a big force at this tournament," Johns explained. "The other big deck was the Kird Ape/Serendib Efreet deck. When I sat down to build this deck my first thoughts were what would be the Necro player's nightmare and what has a good chance to beat control decks in the first game."



Zila vs. Pikula

Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz of The Bronx, New York, a Classic semifinalist, connected his success not to any one aspect of the deck, but to the preparation he put in prior to the tournament: "The key to my success was the large amount of work I put into developing the deck. The deck started out a lot slower and was three colors originally. Eventually, through lots of playtesting, the deck became five colors, and it worked a lot better."

Huei-Saint Shwe of Sunnyvale, California, who was the Classic finalist, claimed his high finish was due, in large part, to the control he added to his Zoo deck.

"Although I was playing a speed deck, it was the touch of countermagic I had that made it very successful," said Shwe. "They helped out so much because most of the cards that really stop my deck like Moat or Abyss cost four mana to cast, and I've usually done a lot of damage early so they can't afford to wait until they can cast a Moat and have a counterspell to back it up."

Jason Zila of Huntington Beach, California, the Master finalist in the Standard tournament, said the restricted cards helped him.

"Restricted cards were the key to my deck. My deck was basically a white-control deck, but since there were a few key cards that could cripple my deck, I splashed blue for some countermagic. My whole deck was based around getting a mana lock on my opponent and it happened very quickly in many of the games."

San Diego, California's Brian Hacker, a Standard Master semifinalist, said his success was due to the fact that his weenie–mono-black deck was often mistaken for a standard Necrodeck.

"My deck had two Necros straight and one more in the sideboard. However, it was more of a black-weenie deck than a classic Necrodeck. It included twelve knights, three Erg Raiders, and four Hypnotic Specters, plus four Mishra's Factories. My defense was made up of two Contagions and two Terrors. My deck had only one [Nevinyrral's] Disk, which often threw my opponents off as they expected me to have more of them. Many people would put in standard anti-Necro countermeasures and they were surprised that my deck wasn't a standard Necro. For instance, Serrated Arrows worked well against a standard Necrodeck, but with my four Bad Moons, Serrated Arrows wasn't as good."

Another Standard Master semifinalist, Chris Pikula of Chesterton, Indiana, felt that the matchups each round were a big part of his achievement.

"Fortunately, I didn't face any players who seemed prepared to play against Necro; at least, not until I played Zila in the semifinals [and lost]. I thought it was really odd that people figured that Necro wouldn't be there."

by Henry A. Stern

the Pros

Impact of *Mirage*

Next we asked the competitors about the impact *Mirage* had on their decks and on the tournament scene in general. Johns felt that his two Mystical Tutors made a big difference: "The huge thing I thought, for my deck, was the one Balance, one Swords to Plowshares, and one Disenchant combined with two Mystical Tutors. Those cards saved me many times. I wouldn't have played this deck without Mystical Tutor."

O'Mahoney-Schwartz didn't notice that much of an impact but did say one particular card was being used a lot.

"*Mirage* didn't have a large impact overall but some of the individual cards were very powerful," he said. "I saw a number of Grinning Totems in use at Dallas."

Shwe also mentioned Mystical Tutors and felt that Dwarven Miner worked well in his deck. In Standard, Zila felt that *Mirage* was key to his deck's success: "The Tutors from *Mirage* helped my deck a lot. I used the white one for many of my key artifacts and [Circle of Protections] in the sideboard."

McCabe vs. Hacker

Hacker felt many people had yet to discover new decks based on *Mirage* cards, but that there were some players who merely incorporated *Mirage* into existing deck concepts.

"It didn't seem like there was a whole lot. I don't know if it was because *Mirage* hadn't been out long enough for there to be a dramatic impact, but it seemed like most of the decks could have been made prior to *Mirage* or were only slightly influenced by *Mirage*. For instance, I had four Choking Sands in my deck but they could have just as easily been Icequakes."

Chris Pikula didn't use any *Mirage* cards in his deck but felt that *Mirage* did influence the tournament and feared running into a Hammer of Bogardan deck.

DCI Changes

Finally, we asked the Standard competitors about the impact of the January DCI restrictions taking place and the retirement of *Fallen Empires* and *Ice Age* from Standard play. All felt the changes were for the best, even if it did cripple many of the current popular deck types.

"I don't think that deck would work without the restricted cards," said Zila. "I think the January restrictions will be good for the game. It will be very interesting to see what the new decks are. Also, the new restrictions should open up deck designs so that we see a lot more cards being played than before. I think the blue/red, Counterspell/Hammer deck will be very popular."

Hacker felt the changes would have a tremendous impact.

"The new restrictions should have a major impact on the playing field. Some of the decks that I saw in Dallas and many of the dominant decks in general seemed to rely on the restricted cards—notably Zuran Orb, Ivory Tower, and Balance. With those cards gone, I don't think the slower Winter Orb decks will be as effective and certainly Mystical Tutor for the 'whatever' decks will be diminished."

Chris Pikula shared some of the same sentiments and gave us his predictions regarding the future of Standard tournament play.

"The new restrictions are really interesting. I like the fact that the restricted cards are now banned. I am upset about the months without "pain lands." Since there will no longer be Zuran Orb or Ivory Tower, I think for a while people will think that the deck to beat will be mono-red. However, eventually people will realize that the way to beat red is with control. I think that black will be very weak. I anticipate blue/red and white/red control as well as Armageddon decks. If you're looking for offensive decks, I think that mono-red will be the way to go."

The Duelist Sideboard asked many of the top Classic (Type I) and Type II players

Type II Barometer Check

Pro Tour–Dallas Offered the Largest Pool of Magic Cards Ever

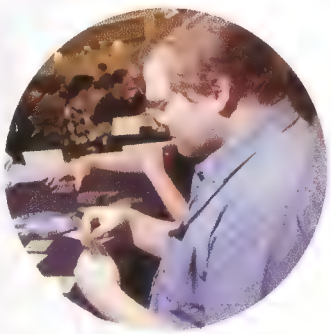
by Beth Moursund

From the time the DCI first created Standard (Type II) rules until the end of 1996, only one expansion set—*The Dark*—has rotated out. With the addition of *Mirage* shortly before Pro Tour–Dallas in November, players competing in Dallas had the largest pool of cards ever available to choose from. In January, however, *Fallen Empires* and *Ice Age* will rotate out, shrinking the card pool dramatically. What do the top players think of these changes? Which is the better environment for tournament play?

More Cards, More Possible Decks

Many players like having a huge pool of cards to choose from—the more cards, the better. With a bigger card selection, the number of different decks that are theoretically possible grows exponentially. We saw quite a variety of decks at Dallas, ranging from the old standard Necrodecks and creature/Armageddon decks to new experiments like the Floodgate/Spawning Bed and the Pox/Nicol Bolas/Shallow Grave deck, the latter which reportedly managed a first-turn win in one match.

Mark Justice, 1995 U.S. **Magic** Champion and 1996 World Finalist, thinks that a bigger card pool is best for the more serious player. "I prefer a larger environment," he said. "Even though Necrodecks were prevalent in the finals, you saw such a variety of decks. You're always going to have your prevalent decks, but there are lots of different themes, and a big environment will provide that. With a small environment, people will figure out the few themes that are really good, but a big environment like this is really good for a competitor because it gives those people who are willing to put the time in, a little bit of an advantage."



Huei-Saint Shwe, a finalist in the Classic event, also prefers the larger Standard environment. "I like having more cards to choose from. I don't mind them removing sets every once in a while, but I don't want them to get back down to only three sets or something like that. You want to face a field that has more variety. You don't want everybody to be playing the same one or two decks. Right now I'm seeing a lot of different decks." But does the larger environment really produce more deck types? The answer may surprise you.

Old Cards Equal Old Decks

One problem with keeping the older cards in the environment is that players often find something that works and just stick with it. Decks do evolve a little as new expansion sets are released, but when an old, slightly overpowered card is available, a player would be foolish to replace it with the new, more balanced version.

Yes, entirely new deck types still do get invented. As mentioned earlier, we saw a scattering of unique deck types in Dallas. None of them, however, ended up ranking near the top. Nearly all of the highest-finishing players used deck types that were winning tournaments before *Mirage* entered the scene, with just a few *Mirage* cards swapped in. One of the Master-division semifinalists, Chris Pikula, even bragged about having no *Mirage* cards in his entire deck. Quite a few top players have been complaining for months that Standard is stagnant, and the addition of *Mirage* really hasn't changed public opinion.

As for the large card pool, much of that size is illusion concerning constructed-deck tournament play. Since intelligent players will always pick the cards that work best for their particular deck recipes, and the number of unique concepts is fairly small, the number of different cards actually used for tournament decks is far, far less than the number that's available to choose from. Just to give some idea of how inbred the tournament card pool is, the Dallas "playoff"

decks—Top 8 Masters and Top 8 Juniors—including sideboards, contained a total of just 142 different cards. Leave out the land, and the total drops to 125.

Dennis Bentley, the 1996 U.S. Champion, was actually disappointed by the lack of variety he saw in the Dallas Standard field. "I'm hearing about a lot of other decks, but the basic concept of decks looks to be the same. The only new one I keep hearing about is the straight-white deck that a lot of Dallas people are playing. The rest is just differences in creatures, basically. People have gone with Frenetic Efreet, Maro, Centaurs, and then the Tutors."

Out with the Old, In with the New

Regardless of whether you think shrinking the Standard card pool is a good or bad idea, it's happening. The DCI has switched the Standard rules back to almost their original version, so each new expansion will force one older expansion out. To start this process and catch up to the current expansions, *Fallen Empires* and *Ice Age* were removed from the Standard environment at the beginning of the year.

This removal stirs up a great deal of controversy. *Fallen Empires* could be removed without too much weeping, but *Ice Age* cards are critical to many current deck types. Two cards in particular will leave a huge void in today's Standard tournament scene: Necropotence and Icy Manipulator. Also, nearly every player using multicolor decks have been adding *Ice Age*'s "painlands" for part of their mana. Players will now have to make more difficult decisions about which lands to include. The total impact is much broader, however. That same count that showed only 125 distinct non-land cards among the Dallas playoff decks also showed that 26 of them would be lost after January 1. That's over 20 percent!

Nevertheless, most of the players are still looking forward to January and its changes. Why? Almost all gave the same reason: the demise of the Necrodeck. Necropotence may or may not deserve the reputation it's earned, but it has certainly gained a mental lock. A fair number of distinctly different deck types include a few Necropotences, but in the minds of many players, they all blend together into one towering Necrodeck which threatens to stamp out every spark of originality.

Many Pro Tour players hope that removing Necropotence will force those who have been stuck in a Necro rut to try something different. They also hope that the radical disruption of the whole Standard environment will encourage players who have always copied decks from magazines and the Internet to try some new ideas of their own.

On the Horizon

The January changes may be only a foreshadowing of a bigger shakeup to come. *Fifth Edition* is due for release this spring. While WotC insiders are keeping a tight lip on what's in and out, they've warned players to expect a lot of changes. Some of the "sacred cows," which players take for granted, will leave. Speculation among players has run wild, with folks on the Internet claiming insider knowledge of everything from the removal of all the white-destruction spells, to replacing Black and White Knights with "pump-knights," to the inclusion of painlands, Rukh Eggs, and Underworld Dreams.

Those in the know aren't talking—though they can't help but smirk at some of the purported card lists—so we'll just have to wait and see. One thing is certain, however: fun is on the horizon.

Pick of the Nouveau

Juniors Sparkle at Pro Tour–Dallas

by Scott McGough

Just as Texas is not yet known for its vineyards, the Pro Tour is not yet known for its Junior division. All the more fitting, then, that the Pro Tour's very first Junior Championships was held in the heart of Texas's newly designated wine country. Only time will tell if the Lone Star State's vintners flourish or wither, but Pro Tour–Dallas was still a milestone for the Juniors as it marked the end of their struggle to gain attention and respect from the gaming community commensurate with the excitement and competition they generate.

Over 150 participants converged on the Dallas-Metro area, constructing decks from the largest Standard (Type II) card pool ever. They came to compete for $60,000 in scholarship funds, to earn the title of first-ever Junior Champion. They also found time to debate the issues that concern them (their Rodney Dangerfield status in the TCG press; the conspicuous absence of a Junior-division event in Pro Tour Paris; their desire to lower the age ceiling between Junior and Master Divisions), tell war stories, and talk strategy with the extended family of serious **Magic** players.

After Saturday's eight rounds of Swiss-style pairings, Sunday's quarterfinalists hailed Patrick Chapin of Manchester, Michigan; Justin Schneider of Lutherville, Maryland; Jason Moungey of Waterloo, Wisconsin; Jeremy Baca of Richardson, Texas; Vinnie Falcone of Metairie, Louisiana; Jeff Simoneau of San Jose, California; Yubin Tao of Mountain View, California; and Adam Jansen from Roselle, Illinois. The quarterfinalists' deck strategies included strong, overwhelming defense from Schneider, Baca, and Tao; aggressive direct damage and untouchable creatures from Falcone; tournament familiars like Simoneau's tried-and-true Necrodeck and Jansen and Moungey's modified Erhnageddon decks; and the back-to-basics approach of Chapin's "Sligh" deck.

In the best-of-three quarters, Schneider outlasted Tao 2–1 in a marathon exchange of counterspells, Kjeldoran Outposts, and Serrated Arrows counters. Simoneau's Necrodeck functioned flawlessly, churning out the first-turn Dark Rituals and "Hyppies" that allowed for a 2–0 sweep of Moungey. Baca got the better of Falcone, in part by using Divine Offering on his own artifacts to replenish his life count long enough to take the match 2–1. Chapin was mana screwed in his first match, but the efficiency of his deck design allowed him to sweep the next two games against Jansen.

The semifinals were more decisive, but no less exciting. After he lost three games in a row to Chapin in free play the day before, Baca was both eager for a rematch and fearful of a repeat. He had developed a winning strategy in time for the official match, however, and swept his opponent 3–0. Simoneau's Necrodeck was poorly suited to prevail over Schneider's Winter Orb/Icy Manipulator lock, especially after Schneider sideboarded in his Tidal Waves. Schneider largely dominated his opponent, effectively blunting his offense, and took the match 3–1.

Baca and Schneider then took their places for the final best-of-five games match. Microphones and cameras recorded the action (though, as it turns out, not enough of it) and simulcast it to both viewers in the venue and interested cybersurfers on the Internet. Schneider set the pace for the first two games, effectively denying Baca any opportunity to generate offense. He played Armageddon, Strip Mine, and Political Trickery on Baca's Kjeldoran Outposts, and he used Zuran Orb/Icy Manipulator or counterspells on everything else until Baca was forced to concede. The second game mirrored the first, with Schneider effectively controlling the board, decisively playing Hurkyl's Recall late in the game to force another concession. After ninety minutes of intense concentration, both players and the officials took a well-deserved breather to stretch out and clear their heads.

Crop

Down 0–2 after the break, Baca needed to and did take control of both the tempo and the match. Schneider's mana problems in game 3 gave Baca the opening he needed to swarm his opponent, knocking him down to 4 life. Frustrated, Schneider conceded and snapped, "Shut up!" at Judge Henry Stern, who was cautioning him to be clearer about which cards he was touching and how he was using them. Stern issued an official warning to Schneider for unsportsmanlike conduct, and reiterated that Schneider must be definite about what moves he was making, and that he must clearly communicate those moves to Baca and the judges.

Schneider's concentration was clearly broken in game 4. Given another warning for touching his sideboard during the game, the flustered finalist simply could not remember that Baca had Kismet out. Stern and the other judges present had to repeatedly remind him to bring his cards into play tapped, and the interruptions only frayed his temper further and fueled his distraction. Finally, after Baca's Kjeldoran Outpost brought his life total down to 9, Schneider tried to cast Armageddon with an island that he had just played normally. Stern refused to allow the spell to be cast (with the island tapped due to Kismet, Schneider didn't have the mana) and forced Schneider to take 3 damage from mana burn. Soon the fourth game was over, the match score was tied, and it was clear that whoever could establish the final game's pace would win the title.

The last game also started off strong for Baca, but he was unable to effectively capitalize on Schneider's slow start as he did in the previous two games. The longer Schneider's defense kept him alive, the more likely his deck was to assert itself. After Schneider used his Political Trickery and Jester's Cap to get rid of Baca's Kjeldoran Outposts, it came down to who would run out of cards first. Baca laid out his own Jester's Cap and proceeded to take Schneider's Divine Offering, Jester's Cap, and Hurkyl's Recall, leaving his Feldon's Cane untouched. Schneider promptly drew the Cane, cast it, and recycled his graveyard into his deck. With only four cards left in his deck, no method of dealing damage, and a freshly "Caned" opponent, Baca conceded. The two shook hands, and the champion was crowned.

For a minute or two. As soon as Baca was back among his teammates on Team Dallas, he noticed that his deck now included Adarkar Wastes from Schneider's deck. One of the land grabs Schneider had made with Political Trickery had inadvertently become a permanent swap; both decks were now technically illegal, and the question was when they became so. After a very tense meeting—during which time Schneider was in a state of disbelief, Baca was grim, and their respective camps were on the warpath out in the hallway—the judges ruled that since it could not be determined when the illegal switch had taken place (the video cameras had been pulled away to monitor the Master-division finals), the match results would stand as they had been played. Schneider won games 1, 2 and 5, so the cards may only have been switched during the last game and mistakenly collected in the post-match hubbub. Schneider was visibly relieved, and Baca had to be content with second place.

Watch for the next Junior-division event, a Rochester Draft featuring *Mirage* and *Visions*, aboard the Queen Mary ocean-liner in Long Beach, California, from February 28 through March 2.

Justin Schneider Perseveres

by Scott McGough

'I've been waiting for this for a long time'

Justin Schneider must have insulted a gypsy in a previous life, because his successful trip to the first Junior Championships was almost comically arduous. Over the past year, he endured rumors of cheating on the Internet and an agonizing set of close-but-no-cigar finishes in New York and Columbus. And just before Pro Tour–Dallas kicked off, he had to overcome a last-minute deck change that he was not a hundred percent comfortable with and an error-laden decklist that had him scrambling for cards minutes before play commenced. Even after he won his title, a post-match judges' conference almost forced him to play the fifth-and-deciding game over again. Whatever else is true, the fifteen-year-old worked for and earned his trophy.

JUSTIN SCHNEIDER'S DECKLIST

- 4 Arcane Denial
- 3 Armageddon
- 1 Balance
- 1 Black Vise
- 4 Disenchant
- 1 Divine Offering
- 3 Enlightened Tutor
- 1 Feldon's Cane
- 4 Icy Manipulator
- 1 Ivory Tower
- 1 Land Tax
- 3 Marble Diamond
- 2 Mystical Tutor
- 3 Serrated Arrows
- 3 Sky Diamond
- 3 Swords to Plowshares
- 3 Winter Orb
- 3 Wrath of God
- 1 Zuran Orb

LAND

- 4 Adarkar Wastes
- 5 Island
- 8 Plains
- 1 Ruins of Trokair
- 1 Strip Mine

SIDEBOARD

- 1 Circle of Protection: Red
- 2 Hurkul's Recall
- 4 Jester's Cap
- 2 Kjeldoran Outpost
- 2 Political Trickery
- 1 Soul Echo
- 2 Tidal Waves
- 1 Wrath of God

Schneider's deck for Dallas was designed by his friend and mentor Mike Long, but still Schneider had to be convinced to use it. "I didn't think the deck was that good," he recalled. "I would have liked more Diamonds, and I hated the fact that it had sixty-four cards." After he and Long finally agreed on the deck's theme at 1:30 A.M. the morning of the tournament, both of them fell asleep before they could physically construct it. With ten minutes left to submit a decklist and construct a matching deck, Schneider scrawled out a hurried and near-illegible roster of cards, and had his friends help him try to assemble it. He recalls people frantically running up and down stairs and hallways trying to secure the cards on the list: "It was a nightmare." With a little hindsight (and a $16,000 scholarship), he's now reasonably sure that he played the right deck.

In addition to a strong deck, it was Schneider's playing skills that took him through the quarterfinals, though he himself was not happy with his performance in the Round of 8. After Jeff Simoneau did not activate Nevinyrral's Disk once it was out and Jeremy Baca played Jester's Cap but did not take Feldon's Cane, Schneider said, "Usually, I rely on my playing ability, but today I relied on my opponent's ability to play badly." He also made several mistakes himself, such as forgetting the effects of Kismet and snapping at the judges after he lost his second game in the finals. He was able to quickly capitalize on his opponents' lapses, however, while his opponents did not return the favor. At this level, that's often the only difference between a finalist and the champion.

Of all the internal and external obstacles that Schneider overcame, the hardest to bear were the rumors of his cheating and the slight regard for his ability. Although he doesn't spend much time online, he plays and socializes with people who do. "That stuff on the [Internet] really hurt me...people calling me a cheater, saying that they couldn't wait to see me fail in Dallas because I'm not really a good player. Well, Dallas proves that I'm a good player. I won."

He hopes to further silence his critics at Los Angeles and New York in 1997. Given where he's at and where he's been, he stands an excellent chance of doing just that, and of becoming **Magic**'s first-ever repeat champion.

Smooth Operator

Jeremy Baca Brings Undeniable Grace to Second Place

by Scott McGough

JEREMY BACA'S DECKLIST

3 Armageddon
1 Balance
1 Black Vise
3 Disenchant
2 Divine Offering
2 Fellwar Stone
4 Icy Manipulator
1 Land Tax
4 Marble Diamond
4 Serrated Arrows
4 Swords to Plowshares
3 Winter Orb
3 Wrath of God
1 Zuran Orb

LAND

4 Kjeldoran Outpost
4 Mishra's Factory
6 Plains
1 Strip Mine

SIDEBOARD

2 Aeolipile
1 Disenchant
1 Divine Offering
1 Feldon's Cane
3 Hallowed Ground
1 Ivory Tower
1 Jester's Cap
1 Kismet
3 Millstone
1 Winter Orb
1 Wrath of God

Through it all, Jeremy Baca was unflappable. He made it to the finals, dropped two extraordinarily long games in a row against Justin Schneider, scored two lightning-fast victories, and then lost the final game and the match amidst a storm of controversy, with his friends and opponents each voicing loud opinions on both sides of the issue.

"I don't really care about that," he said, referring to the Adakar Wastes/Kjeldoran Outpost switch that almost invalidated the final game. "He won fair and square. What I do care about is that I didn't remember that he had one of my Outposts. When I was Capping [Schneider], the reason I took Divine Offering over Feldon's Cane was that I thought I had two Outposts and two Millstones left, but in fact I had one Outpost and two Millstones. I counted my graveyard and I counted the cards in play and I saw two [Outposts] in the graveyard, so I was like, 'There must be two more in the deck,' because they weren't anywhere else. I didn't think they'd be over on his side. If [Political Trickery] were an enchantment or had just destroyed my land, I would have seen something in my own graveyard to remind me it had gone off."

Baca believes that the troublesome switch occurred in game 5, and that the decks only became "illegal" after the match had ended and the players collected their cards. Still, he states without irony, "Political Trickery is tricky. That's the first time it's really been played on me. That card's evil."

The pride of Richardson, Texas, Baca is just sixteen years old and routinely plays against seasoned Masters like George Baxter and Preston Poulter. He's been playing **Magic** for two years; like Schneider, he started playing with *Legends*. Hanging around and playing with Team Dallas has helped him transcend his initial infatuation with mono-black decks, and to make the most out of his tournament experience.

"You don't learn deck building at a tournament," he said. "You learn from your mistakes, especially at pro tourneys." The mistakes he made in Dallas (and by his own admission he made "a lot") have already been dissected and analyzed, and the lessons he learned can easily be factored into his game plan. Considering his strong second-place finish, his cool demeanor in the tensest of tournament settings, and a big-picture philosophy that states, "I should play my best game" instead of "I need to win these next two matches to make it to the finals," there may not be much more room for improvement.

Justin Schneider (Champion); Jeremy Baca (Finalist)

The Top 2 Juniors, Justin Schneider and Jeremy Baca, both played Icy Manipulator/Winter Orb–lock decks, much like Jason Zila and George Baxter in the Masters competition. In fact, Baca's deck was the same "White Trash" deck as Baxter's was intended to be. Schneider's blue/white deck, designed by Mike Long, was quite similar to Zila's. Schneider had no Kjeldoran Outposts in his main deck—he could only win by library depletion, without even a Millstone to speed up the process, or by damage from Black Vise. Baca used four Kjeldoran Outposts and four Mishra's Factories in his main deck, and most often won by attacking with Soldiers after locking down his opponent.

When the two faced each other in the finals, the sideboards became key. Schneider's Political Trickery was more or less balanced by Baca's Hallowed Ground, but his Hurkyl's Recall proved devastating against Baca's heavily artifact-dependent strategy. Also, Schneider had six Diamonds to Baca's four, giving him mana superiority at several critical times. Baca's two Fellwar Stones weren't able to make up the difference, since Schneider simply refused to leave any land in play after Armageddon, making the Stones useless. *(Refer to pages 32–33 for their decklists.)*

Patrick Chapin (Semifinalist)

The style of deck Chapin chose has been discussed for months on the Internet, but came as a surprise to many Pro Tour players. It's called a "Sligh" deck, named after Paul Sligh, who first popularized it. Sligh decks boast a range of small-to-medium, very cost-effective creatures—including some which most serious players laugh at, such as Ironclaw Orcs—along with Lightning Bolts, Incinerates, and a few X spells, to deliver lots of fast damage. Chapin removed the X spells from his deck, instead using three recyclable direct-damage spells: two Death Sparks and Hammer of Bogardan. These spells don't have the ability to end the game with one large blast like a Fireball might, but their reusability makes them better for clearing creatures out of the way. Chapin summed up the deck's strategy by saying, "A few points here, a few points there, and it just seems like nobody can keep up. I don't understand why it works, but it works."

Jeff Simoneau (Semifinalist)

Simoneau chose a very standard Necrodeck, simply replacing three of the now-restricted Hymn to Tourachs with four Stupors. "I saw a lot of blue/white decks, and I figured that it's one of the best decks to compete against," he said with a shrug. His version of the deck differed slightly from the usual formula by including only two Drain Lifes rather than three or four, and six "pump-knights." He also ran two Contagions and two Serrated Arrows standard, along with two more of each in his sideboard. He had no land destruction except Strip Mine in his main deck, but included four Choking Sands in his sideboard, allowing him to not only disrupt his opponent's mana supply but also to gain some extra damage against anything but a black deck.

Top 8 Junior Decklists

PATRICK CHAPIN

1	Ball Lightning
1	Black Vise
2	Death Spark
2	Dragon Whelp
2	Dwarven Miner
4	Goblin Balloon Brigade
3	Gorilla Shaman
4	Guerrilla Tactics
3	Hammer of Bogardan
4	Incinerate
4	Ironclaw Orcs
4	Lightning Bolt
4	Orcish Artillery
1	Orcish Cannoneers
2	Orcish Librarians
3	Pillage
1	Mishra's Factory
17	Mountain
1	Strip Mine

Sideboard

4	Anarchy
3	Mana Barb
2	Meekstone
3	Pyroblast
1	Red Elemental Blast
2	Shatter

JEFF SIMONEAU

2	Contagion
3	Dark Ritual
2	Drain Life
1	Hymn to Tourach
4	Hypnotic Specter
1	Ihsan's Shade
1	Ivory Tower
1	Knight of Stromgald
4	Necropotence
4	Nevinyrral's Disk
3	Order of the Ebon Hand
2	Serrated Arrows
4	Stupor
1	Zuran Orb
4	Mishra's Factory
1	Strip Mine
19	Swamp

Sideboard

4	Choking Sands
2	Contagion
4	Dystopia
1	Ihsan's Shade
1	Infernal Darkness
2	Serrated Arrows

JASON MOUNGEY

3	Balance
4	Deadly Insect
2	Disenchant
4	Earthquake
4	Enlightened Tutor
4	Fire Diamond
4	Icy Manipulator
2	Jayemdae Tome
4	Land Tax
3	Lightning Bolt
3	Marble Diamond
2	Moss Diamond
2	Stormbind
3	Swords to Plowshares
4	Wildfire Emissary
3	Winter Orb
1	Zuran Orb
7	Brushland
3	Karplusan Forest
3	Mishra's Factory
5	Mountain
5	Plains
4	Strip Mine

Sideboard

2	Armageddon
1	Disenchant
4	Earthquake
4	Erhnam Djinn
1	Pillage
2	Pyroblast
1	Tranquil Domain
2	Wrath of God

Jason Moungey (Quarterfinalist)

Like the finalists' decks, Moungey's deck included the Icy Manipulator/Winter Orb combination along with plenty of Diamonds for mana. The rest of his deck, however, was radically different. Moungey mentioned that he evolved the deck from an "Erhnageddon" deck. He strategized to use direct damage, Swords to Plowshares, and Icy Manipulators to eliminate or pin down his opponent's creatures, then attack with an "untouchable" creature—one that couldn't be removed by Swords to Plowshares or Lightning Bolt, the two most commonly used anti-creature spells. His Deadly Insects and Wildfire Emissaries both fit the bill. Winter Orbs were not the focus of his deck. Instead, Moungey said, the purpose of the Orbs was "to control Thawing Glaciers, Kjeldoran Outposts, or Necropotence."

Vinnie Falcone (Quarterfinalist)

Falcone's deck included the same three untargetable creatures as Jansen's, but the similarity ends there. Forget control—Falcone focused his deck for damage and more damage. He brought out Elvish Archers immediately to put his opponent on the defensive and give him or her no breathing room. His six mana-producing elves help ensure the larger creatures wouldn't be far behind. Besides the elves and untargetables, four Erhnam Djinns rounded out the creature supply. That's two-thirds of the deck. The other one-third was consumed by direct damage: Lightning Bolts, Incinerates, Fireballs, and Stormbind. He used these spells most often to eliminate his opponent's creatures, but he could also eliminate his opponent when Falcone faced a few- or no-creature deck. This combination worked well against almost everything.

Adam Jansen (Quarterfinalist)

Jansen's deck shared many similarities with Moungey's even though he used no red. Like Moungey, he relied on "untouchable" creatures—in this case, Deadly Insects, Jolrael's Centaurs, and Autumn Willows—to take out his opponent. Like classical Erhnageddon, Jansen would try to get out a creature and then cast Armageddon. This land destruction was backed up by Icy Manipulators and Diamonds to control his opponent's mana supply and to supply his own mana needs. Two Thawing Glaciers and Land Tax helped him replace his own land quickly, and either of those meshed with Sylvan Library to provide plenty of choice over which cards he drew. "I chose green/white although it's a slower building deck," Jansen said. "It seems to maintain control for most of the game."

Yubin Tao (Quarterfinalist)

Tao called his deck "The 1:30 Special" because he built it in a rush at about 1:30 A.M. the night before the tournament. He built a blue/white control deck with plenty of counterspells, along with white for destroying creatures, artifacts, and enchantments. Soldiers from three Kjeldoran Outposts provided the deck's only damage. Four Mystical Tutors were key to the 1:30 Special's success; they allowed Tao to fetch the white-destruction spells when he needed them. In the light of day, Tao looked at his deck and shook his head. "I should have played with Fellwar Stones, I don't see why I didn't. I didn't use white Tutors, I don't know why, that was another mistake I made…I was in a rush." Despite his disclaimers, however, the deck proved one of the strongest in the tournament.

Junior Decklists

VINNIE FALCONE
1 Autumn Willow
3 Deadly Insect
4 Elvish Archer
4 Erhnam Djinn
3 Fireball
2 Fyndhorn Elves
4 Incinerate
4 Jolrael's Centaur
4 Lightning Bolt
4 Llanowar Elves
2 Stormbind
9 Forest
4 Karplusan Forest
4 Mishra's Factory
7 Mountain
1 Strip Mine

Sideboard
2 Anarchy
1 Autumn Willow
2 Hammer of Bogardan
2 Lhurgoyf
3 Pillage
3 Red Elemental Blast
2 Serrated Arrows

YUBIN TAO
1 Balance
4 Counterspell
3 Disenchant
3 Dissipate
4 Force of Will
2 Icy Manipulator
1 Land Tax
4 Mystical Tutor
1 Political Trickery
1 Recall
2 Serrated Arrows
1 Swords to Plowshares
3 Wrath of God
4 Zuran Orb
4 Adarkar Wastes
9 Island
3 Kjeldoran Forest
8 Plains
1 Strip Mine
1 Thawing Glaciers

Sideboard
2 Circle of Protection: Red
1 Disenchant
3 Divine Offering
2 Hydroblast
1 Ivory Tower
1 Jester's Cap
1 Kjeldoran Outpost
2 Political Trickery
1 Serrated Arrows
1 Swords to Plowshares

ADAM JANSEN
2 Autumn Willow
4 Armageddon
1 Balance
4 Deadly Insect
4 Disenchant
3 Icy Manipulator
4 Jolrael's Centaur
1 Land Tax
2 Marble Diamond
2 Moss Diamond
1 Serrated Arrows
4 Swords to Plowshares
2 Sylvan Library
2 Wrath of God
1 Zuran Orb
4 Brushland
10 Forest
1 Mishra's Factory
9 Plains
1 Strip Mine
2 Thawing Glaciers

Sideboard
1 Circle of Protection: Red
1 Concordant Crossroads
1 Crumble
1 Divine Offering
1 Feldon's Cane
1 Hall of Gemstone
2 Illumination
1 Jester's Cap
1 Karma
1 Reverse Damage
1 Seeds of Innocence
2 Serrated Arrows
1 Wrath of God

JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Dallas, Texas (November 23–24, 1996)

PLACE	MONEY	NAME	AGE	HOMETOWN
Champion	$16,000	Justin Schneider	15	Lutherville, MD
Finalist	$10,000	Jeremy Baca	16	Richardson, TX
Semifinalist	$5,400	Jeff Simoneau	17	San Jose, CA
Semifinalist	$5,400	Patrick Chapin	16	Manchester, MI
Quarterfinalist	$3,200	Adam Jansen	15	Roselle, IL
Quarterfinalist	$3,200	Jason Mounger	18	Waterloo, WI
Quarterfinalist	$3,200	Yubin Tao	17	Mountain View, CA
Quarterfinalist	$3,200	Vinnie Falcone	14	Metairie, LA
9	$800	Geoffrey Anders II	16	Norristown, PA
10	$800	Jon Boyd	16	Ayer, MA
11	$800	David Lively	16	Northboro, MA
12	$800	Rob Beason	17	Pocatello, ID
13	$800	Mark LePine	14	Merrimack, NH
14	$800	Song Ly	15	Vancouver, Canada
15	$800	Jamie Parke	15	Syracuse, NY
16	$800	Justin Smith	16	Woodbine, MD
17	$250	Noah Weil	16	St. Paul, MN
18	$250	Chris Stetzer	17	Des Moines, IA
19	$250	Jason Gordon	16	Fairfield, CT
20	$250	Jeremy Schneider	13	Lutherville, MD
21	$250	Itaru Ishida	17	Tokyo, Japan
22	$250	Mark Oster	17	Westminster, CO
23	$250	Herbie Lukes	15	Highland Park, IL
24	$250	Louis Beryl	15	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
25	$250	Andrew Pacifico	16	Middleburg, FL
26	$250	Brian Harding	16	Fairfield, CT
27	$250	Michael Bregoli	17	Southwick, MA
28	$250	Robert Maher, Jr.	18	Freeport, IL
29	$250	Max Suver	16	Seattle, WA
30	$250	James Takenaga	16	Riverside, CA
31	$250	Takahiro Ui	16	Chiba, Japan
32	$250	Wyatt Wettland	16	Seattle, WA
33		Jesse Powell	16	Stockton, CA
34		Bo Andreatta	18	Reno, NV
35		Jason Simonsen	18	Saint Charles, IL
36		Kyle Smith	14	San Diego, CA
37		Alex Baranosky	16	Newport, RI
38		Jess Means	15	Columbus, OH
39		Mike Britton	16	Temecula, CA
40		Patrick Callahan	13	Atlanta, GA
41		Mitesh Rao	15	St. Charles, IL
42		Feming Chan	16	Cranbury, NJ
43		Steven Wolfman	16	North York, Canada
44		Elijah Pollock	16	Toronto, Canada
45		Mike Winkelstein	16	Atlanta, GA
46		Gavin Kleinhen-Price	16	Sultan, WA
47		Eric Phillips	17	Lincroft, NJ
48		Jason Kelly	15	Jupiter, FL
49		Fred Chu	17	Madison, WI
50		Brian South	17	Sweeney, TX
51		Thomas Girard	15	Vancouver, Canada
52		Andrew Manser	18	Holly, MI
53		Bryan Manolakos	17	Syracuse, NY
54		Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz	16	Brooklyn, NY
55		Joe Weber	17	Oswego, NY
56		Chris Kaczmarek	18	Big Rock, TN
57		Ted Dickerson	17	Webster, TX
58		Greg Mosley	16	Lincoln Park, MI
59		Troy Sutherland	18	Evansdale, IA
60		David Parker	16	Rochester, NY
61		Daniel Barry, Jr.	17	Stockton, CA
62		Trevor Blackwell	17	Modesto, CA
63		David Magnani	16	Rockville, MD
64		Timothy Lyons	18	Iowa City, IA
65		Jeff Hojda	17	Stockton, CA
66		Kayle Hoehn	15	Fort Collins, CO
67		Rick Carlisle	16	Parker, CO
68		Henry Johnson	17	San Luis Opispo, CA
69		Brian Wilson	18	Redmond, WA
70		Darius Johnson	15	Roeford, NC
71		Ryan Stampke	15	Wahiawa, HI
72		Graham Scott	16	Victoria, Canada
73		Zvi Mowshowitz	17	New York, NY
74		Van Russell	15	Hazel Green, AL
75		Adam Lemke	15	Jamesville, NY
76		Christopher Little	16	Fenton, MI
77		Elliott Tucker	17	Overland Park, KS
78		Tom Fitzpatrick	16	Las Vegas, NV
79		Brett Anderson	15	Huntsville, AL
80		Daniel O'Mahoney-Schwartz	17	Pittsburgh, PA
81		Eric Jones	15	Fort Collins, CO
82		Jeremy Lesher	13	Shoemakersville, PA
83		Matthew McGuire	17	Cedar Falls, IA
84		Richard Boyes	18	Bothell, WA
85		Graham Tatomer	18	Santa Barbara, CA
86		Ryan Schnabel	18	Emmaus, PA
87		Andrew Longo	16	N. Brunswick, NJ
88		Tim Odokeychuk	17	Winnepeg, Canada
89		James Murphy	17	Arlington, TX
90		David Press	14	Wichita, KS
91		Ian Kunihara	16	Aiea, HI
92		Matthew Perez	17	Redmond, WA
93		Robert Stead	14	Tampa, FL
94		Brian Kibler	16	Derry, NH
95		Rob Bolick	14	Las Vegas, NV
96		Shawn Roberts	16	Walton, NY
97		Alexander Sutherland	17	Concord, MA
98		Edward Ito	18	Toronto, Canada
99		Ryan Slattery	15	O'Fallon, MO
100		Steve Hirsch	15	Wantagh, NY
101		Viradeth Konkeosisouphanh	18	Las Vegas, NV
102		Kinkaid Murray	15	Whitehorse, Canada
103		Scott Moritz	13	Bremerton, WA
104		Bryan Hubble	17	Katy, TX
105		Nate Clarke	16	Londonderry, NH
106		Daniel Connelly	17	Latham, NY
107		Brandon Baker	15	Salt Lake City, UT
108		Michael Krzywicki	17	Kernersville, NC
109		Claude Wild	16	Deltona, FL
110		Thomas Mosher	15	The Colony, TX
111		John Meeth	14	Cave Creek, AZ
112		Tyler Ruckman	13	Manassas, VA
113		Dwayne St. Arnauld	15	Deep River, CT
114		Taylor Buckingham	17	Littleton, CO
115		Jeremy Flores	17	College Place, WA
116		Michael Goodwin	18	Mississauga, Canada
117		Nathan Manuel	17	Garland, TX
118		Spencer Furukawa	17	Santa Maria, CA
119		Andrew Johnson	15	Houston, TX
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121		Leland Gibson	15	Ann Arbor, MI
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123		Tim Rivera	16	Las Vegas, NV
124		David Mintz	18	San Luis Obispo, CA
125		Dan Burdick	17	Kansas City, MO
126		Jay Cullison	15	Everett, WA
127		Jason Means	15	Columbus, OH
128		Christopher Cunningham	15	Thornton, CO
129		Matthew Thornton	18	Chicago, IL
130		Nate Foure	17	Devon, PA
131		Bryan Sammon	17	Carrollton, TX
132		Aaron Kline	18	East Windsor, NJ
133		Ryan Kelly	14	Hermitage, TN
134		Ben Sumner		Lewisville, TX
135		Eric Woods	18	Walker, IA
136		Jonathan Dearman	16	Millbrook, AL
137		R. Hunter Goff	18	Little Rock, AR
138		Bill Stead	18	Tampa, FL
139		Joseph Franks		
140		Matt Barnett	18	Morton Grove, IL
141		Drew Foote	18	Las Cruces, NM
142		Adam Masek	16	Petoskey, MI
143		Brett Quorn	18	Woodland, WA
144		Daniel Iruegas		
145		Sean Moore	18	Little Rock, AR
146		Jeremy Simmons		
147		Avery Murray	18	Whitehorse, Canada
148		Matthew Miller	18	Birmingham, AL
149		David Sacher	18	Celina, OH
150		Dave Brunsdon	18	Victoria, Canada
151		Ross Sclafani	18	Brooklyn, NY

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MAGIC The Gathering

by Scott McGough

Pro Tour-Dallas: A Juniors' Masterpiece?

Schneider and Baca prove to be exceptional students of the game

The word "masterpiece" literally refers to a physical object, something that a craftsperson creates as a sort of professional calling card to demonstrate his or her qualifications. One learns the fundamentals of a given discipline by apprenticing with a Master, acquiring technique and gaining knowledge until one is ready to create something of Master-level quality...his or her masterpiece.

In this case, however, it's not a finished product that the Masters want their protégés to take away, but the polish, advanced game play, and true confidence of a tournament veteran. Both of the Junior finalists in Dallas have apprenticed with Masters quite familiar to regular readers of these pages: Jeremy Baca is a member of George Baxter's Team Dallas, and Justin Schneider is a long-time collaborator of Mike Long's. Although the relationship is nowhere near as one-sided as that of the traditional master/apprentice, both outstanding Juniors point to these "elder statesmen" as integral to the development of their strategy, their decks, and their style of play.

"George taught me a lot about how to play tight," Baca said. "He's kind of a father figure." It was Baxter and Team Dallas that offered words of encouragement and focus to Baca after he dropped two in a row and was in danger of being swept out of the finals. It was Baxter and Team Dallas that helped Baca realize that his missing Kjeldoran Outpost was in Schneider's deck, and that there was a chance the final game would have to be replayed. "George taught us all how to take our time, to know what cards are in play and in the graveyard, and to plan ahead."

Watching Baca play is proof enough that he's learned his lessons well. And watching Baxter and Baca interact during the break and after the finals is more than enough to prove that Baxter is an excellent coach to Baca.

Schneider, for his part, won the tournament with a deck designed by Long. Long and Matt Place assisted Schneider with his decklist, catching numerous errors in the hurried document that could have cost Schneider dearly. "I owe Matt Place $5 [for his decklist review]," Schneider commented. "He really saved my ass." Long and Schneider live within a few hours of each other, and frequently make the trip to socialize, strategize, and play **Magic**. Schneider even adopted Long's trademark backwards baseball cap and bare feet for Dallas.

By standing on the shoulders of these giants, Baca and Schneider and many others have succeeded on the Pro Tour, and have done so with literally years to further season themselves, learn the cards and the rules inside out before they have to exit the Junior ranks. Whether they rise up to the Master division by virtue of age or ambition, the current crop of Juniors will be a different breed of Masters altogether. They will already have a full years' tournament-level experience to draw on, and they will have learned from the first generation of **Magic** giants. More importantly, they will be used to a tightly knit social group that is centered around **Magic** but extends beyond the game to their personal lives and relationships. These players are also friends, and the support they demonstrate for one another goes far beyond the money or the attention that teammates often share at Pro Tour events.

During the post-finals hubbub surrounding the swapped Adakar Wastes/Kjeldoran Outpost, for example, both Long and Baxter were clamoring to get into the judges' room to plead their protégé's case. This was not grandstanding or egocentric stage-mothering; both men were entirely earnest that their player get a fair shake in a very confusing and emotional situation.

In the closing moments of the final match's fifth-and-deciding game, Baxter and the Team Dallas contingent were chanting "Cap the Cane! Cap the Cane!" while Long's group, equally out of the competitors' earshot, responded "Don't Cap the Cane! Don't Cap the Cane!" The camaraderie found in these player "families" is not only the best way to compare strategy notes and playtest, but is also just plain fun. As long as the social aspects of the game are tightly entwined with its mechanics, we can count on top-notch Juniors such as Baca and Schneider to become the sort of mentors that they themselves had, and to give as much back to the game and gamers as they themselves received.

When that happens, we will be able to point to the Juniors' masterpiece.

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The Long Road

Some Players Go to Extreme Measures to Qualify

by Jack Lewis Stanton

My first experience with the **Magic** Pro Tour took place in December of 1995 when I (and 239 other players) managed to qualify via the touchtone phone system (thank you speed dial) for Pro Tour–New York, the inaugural event. Personally, I've qualified for a host of sporting events, ranging from the Little League World Championships, the Track and Field Junior Olympics, and the State Chess Championships, but these affairs paled in comparison to that first Pro Tour event. The players were fantastic, New York City was unbelievable, and our private **RoboRally** game with Richard Garfield served as icing on the cake. Unfortunately, I finished 107th, which didn't guarantee me a spot at Los Angeles. I wanted back in. So, like many others, I embarked on a personal crusade to reclaim my rightful spot with the **Magic** elite.

Frustrating Scenario

We all know some player who finished one spot away from qualifying. This can be quite frustrating, especially after driving hundreds of miles just to attend a Qualifier. My first encounter with such a letdown was at the last United States' Qualifier for Los Angeles in Provo, Utah. I ended the Swiss rounds 6–0, and was able to dispatch a very strong opponent 2–1 during the quarterfinals. The semifinals proved to be my Waterloo as Robert Murinaka crushed me like a bug, ending my hopes of playing at Los Angeles, a scene to be repeated by Robert's brother Aaron at a later Qualifier for Pro Tour–Atlanta (Aaron finished third in Atlanta, by the way).

My only moment of glory has come through not qualifying via a Qualifier tournament, but through the DCI rankings for Pro Tour–Columbus, where I finished just out of the money at No. 66. (Interestingly, my roommate in Columbus, Curtis Toone, finished 65th.) Mike Donovan of Robertsville, Missouri, can relate. While attempting to qualify for Pro Tour–Dallas, he logged over 2,800 miles on his car, visiting such "local" Qualifiers as Iowa City, St. Louis, Chicago, Little Rock, and Kansas City.

"The bad thing is coming so close to qualifying for the Standard [competition] in Dallas, but the good thing was the side events," he said. "I was able to enter several sanctioned Classic events that led to an automatic berth in the Dallas Classic competition via the rankings."

The Holland Experience

Many competitors plan their qualifying efforts with a group of players from their area, sharing expenses and practicing together as a team. Many of these soirees are planned sometimes months in advance after precise dates have been posted on the WotC website. So what do you do when a Qualifier has been canceled on short notice?

Steve Easton, Jason Nicolls, and Michael Tingay of the United Kingdom faced this problem when the U.K. Qualifier was suddenly canceled due to England's strict national policy on unlicensed gambling (or what is perceived to be gambling). The officials of that country somehow decided that **Magic** involved a certain chance factor, and with prizes awarded to the winners, it constituted gambling and all events related to the game had to be booked into a licensed gambling house. With no Qualifier for Dallas available in the U.K., these players decided a trip to Holland was in order.

Tingay explains: "The Holland experience began when the Qualifier for Dallas was canceled. Steve, Jason, and I were going to go. Ironically, it was all Jason's idea and he didn't go in the end because the night before we left, he found out that he was ranked third in the world and was thus qualified.

"So Steve and I drove to Heathrow Airport the day before the event, bought tickets [95 pounds each], and flew out to Schipol Airport. We rented a car [260 pounds] and made our way to Arnhem [120 miles away] where the tournament was to be held. We booked into a hotel for the night [another 60 pounds] and after all this, I had a horrible tournament. Steve made it to the semifinals, but came away one game short from a qualifying spot! All in all, we spent over 600 pounds on the trip, quite a bit when you're on a student's budget."

Kings of the Qualifiers

After speaking with a great many **Magic** players from around the U.S. and abroad, I've decided, based on how many times they've been mentioned in correspondence, that John Chinnock of Summit, New Jersey, and David Price of Ithaca, New York, are the proclaimed "Kings of Qualifying" for the **Magic** Pro Tour.

Chinnock qualified for New York last year via the quick-finger method, but from there on, he found himself unqualified for future events. So, traveling around the New England area, he qualified for Los Angeles, Columbus, and Atlanta by placing first or second in the various Qualifiers he attended. He received an invitation to Dallas based on his very high DCI rankings in Standard.

Price, a proud member of "Team Deadguy," also managed to do the rotary method for New York, and by finishing in the Top 64, he was assured a spot at the subsequent Los Angeles competition. Aboard the Queen Mary, he failed to break the Top 32, so he was forced to enter the rat race (a.k.a. "the Qualifiers").

"It took just one attempt to qualify for Columbus. I drove to New York City [five hours away] for a Neutral Ground Qualifier and I qualified using a Necrodeck," said Price. "In order to qualify for Atlanta, I believe I went to seven or eight Qualifiers, basically driving all over the East Coast. I played in Qualifiers in Maryland [seven-hour drive], Ohio [eight-hour drive], New York City and New Jersey [both five hours), Syracuse [the closest at one hour], and finally, Toronto [seven hours].

At the Toronto Qualifier, where I actually qualified, my opponent in the last round had a card in his deck that didn't belong, so he lost the first game. Then he beat me down over the next two games. It turned out that if my opponent hadn't forfeited that game, I wouldn't have made it into the Final 8," said Price.

"To get to Pro Tour–Dallas, I went to three different Qualifiers. I came in tenth at a Maryland Qualifier, then ended up falling in the semifinals at a New Jersey Qualifier. Finally, I played in Rochester where I got second place after a nail-biter in the Round of 4. Now it's time to qualify for Los Angeles and I'm fairly confident I can do it. With eight Qualifiers, all within a ten-hour drive, I'll be putting a lot of miles on my car. Such is the life of a professional **Magic** player, I suppose."

Happy Endings

In order to be considered a professional, one has to put forth the effort needed to earn the title. David Price, Mike Donovan, and John Chinnock have all earned that distinction, especially now that all three have qualified for the '97 Los Angeles event on their first attempts. The U.K. has worked out its scheduling problems and now has dates set for future Qualifiers, so the best **Magic** players from that area will also come to Los Angeles to stake their claims. Hopefully, I'll be joining them.

Do the T

by Jeff J. Lin

Magic Players Test the Li
Lousy Diets a

Though tournament **Magic** players may be considered "intellectual athletes" (and there are plenty of parallels between them and their physical peers), one area seems to be lacking in preparation.

We're not referring to playtesting or practice, however. The subject of debate is performance enhancement: not through illegal steroids and human growth hormones, but through preparation—diet, nutrition, and sleep.

Can eating and sleeping a certain way make a difference in how you play? Perhaps not your **Magic** play directly, but it does affect how you feel. **Magic** tournaments, which often run for up to eight or nine rounds and sometimes as long as fourteen straight hours, are as much tests of endurance as they are of skill. Matches—and sometimes championships—are often lost due to fatigue-related mistakes: miscalculating an attack, forgetting to activate a special ability, etc. As athletes have known for years, proper nutrition and physical preparation can translate into having the endurance and the edge during those crucial rounds.

Well-rested players always seem to be in short supply at tournaments. "Try to get a good night's sleep the night or two nights before," suggests Vanessa Strong, a lecturer at the department of food science and technology at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, who studies, among other things, the food intake of college students. If you suffer from pretournament nerves that interfere with your sleep the night before a tournament, it's especially important to get enough sleep the week before. "They've found that [athletes] do all right if they got a solid sleep two nights before," she said, even if they were so nervous that they weren't able to sleep well the night before.

Something else you can do to prepare yourself for a tournament is to adjust your sleeping and waking schedule to the tournament hours, offers Paul Cohen, spokesman for the Princeton Review, a company that specializes in preparing students for standardized college and grad-school examinations like the SAT, MCAT, and LSAT: intense, day-long tests that require a lot of mental concentration.

For example, if you normally get up around 10 A.M., but the tournament requires you to be up at 7 A.M., Cohen recommends adjusting your sleep pattern so that you start waking up around 7 A.M. That way you won't be bleary-eyed and drowsy when the first round begins.

Right hing?

Mits of Nd Sleep Deprivation

"A week before the test, we tell our students to go to bed earlier and train their minds to be alert in the morning," Cohen said. "The key is to be consistent."

When the day of the tournament rolls around, Strong says it's important to eat breakfast. "They should eat something—toast or cereal with milk, something to get them started," she said. "If they don't have the beginning calories, they're going to wear down later in the day." She recommends carbohydrates (such as breads, grains, or cereals), especially for those who may experience upset stomachs. "They're easier to digest than high-fat foods, and they're gentler on the digestive system," she said.

During the day, Strong suggests snacking your way throughout the day, eating four to five smaller meals rather than two or three big ones, which can cause drowsiness. "If you eat too much at one time, the blood rushes to the digestive tract," she said. As for specific foods to eat, Strong says to stick with the familiar complex carbohydrates, fruits, and vegetables, and recommends staying away from fried, fatty foods.

The typical convention center food available at larger **Magic** tournaments, however, often falls short of beneficial nutrients. Of the list of items available at Pro Tour–Atlanta—pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers, submarine sandwiches, nachos, giant pretzels, potato chips, and soda—Strong recommended only the submarine sandwich and the giant pretzel ("it's basically carbohydrates with salt"). Instead of soda, she recommends drinking fruit juice, water, or milk.

Another area to be aware of is making sure you get enough fluids into your system. Dehydration can lead to fatigue and nausea, which may interfere with clear thinking. "If you're sitting around not doing much [physically], and you get dehydrated, you may get dizzy and not think as well," said Strong. Again, water and fruit juices are the clear-cut winners.

Coffee and caffeine, long staples of tournament play, may have both positive and negative effects. Some studies have shown that caffeine has helped boost mental acuity in some athletes; however, nothing has been conclusively proven and the jitteriness effect of being "wired" may interfere with your play. Also remember that caffeine is a diuretic and will increase urination; so if you go that route, drink plenty of other liquids and be prepared for frequent bathroom breaks.

Eating a balanced diet, high in grains (complex carbohydrates), fruits and vegetables, may not only help one's **Magic** playing, but has many other healthy side effects. Proper nutrition can benefit one's well-being during the days leading up to the competition in addition to the day of the tournament.

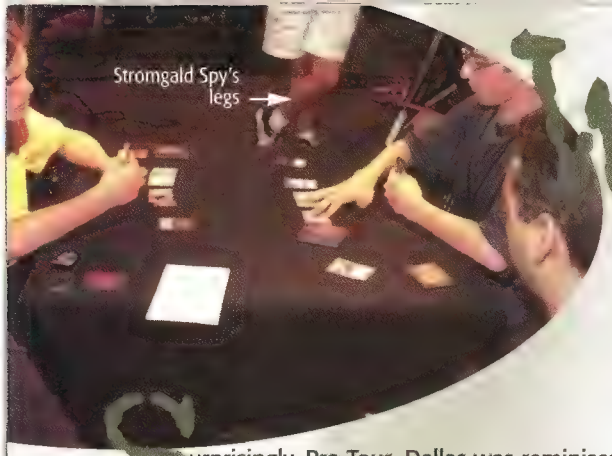
Strong points out, "Your nutrition the weeks before is important or more important than what you eat the day of [the tournament]," she said. For example, making sure you eat enough foods rich in iron, the mineral which helps your blood carry oxygen throughout your body (including the brain), will probably help come tournament time.

Exercise, too, can have healthy side effects. "If they did some exercise, it would increase the red blood cells flowing throughout their cardiovascular system, which results in better endurance," Strong said.

But then, there are players who are doing just fine already. "[When it comes to tournaments,] I do what they call pulling a Ghandi," said twenty-one-year-old Brian Weissman, a **Magic** tournament veteran from California. "I get so focused on the tournament that food doesn't become an issue.

"You'd think that if you sleep well and eat well that you'd play well, but that isn't necessarily the case," he said. "Sometimes when you're on the verge of exhaustion you just get into a zone [where you play really well]. At Origins [last July], I stayed up all night playing in *The Duelist* team challenge, only got two hours of sleep, and I played flawlessly the next day."

Truth be told, Weissman was a Master division quarterfinalist in Columbus, Ohio. Despite his lack of sleep, he still walked away with $4,400.



Whispers from the Stromgald Spy

by Lisa Stevens

Surprisingly, Pro Tour–Dallas was reminiscent of the New York event (February '96) as the Stromgald Spy froze her toes off when an ice storm descended on the Dallas-Fort Worth Hilton in Grapevine. But the cold weather outside didn't limit the hot tidbits developing inside.

First off, Pro Tour–Dallas was rife with controversy. The first miscue occurred during a Round 9 match between California's Jason Zila and Salt Lake City's Mark Justice. Zila won the first duel, but the advantage was Justice's late in the second game. While Justice used his Thawing Glaciers to get a land from his library, Zila used his Feldon's Cane. Justice, however, didn't see Zila use the Cane and never cut the new library. When Zila drew Zuran Orb as his first draw, Justice cried foul and the judges were summoned.

After gathering all the evidence, Head Judge Charlie Catino huddled with the other Pro Tour judges. In the meantime, Justice and Zila mistakenly thought they should continue playing, so they did and Zila ended up winning with major help from the Orb. When the judges returned to the players' table, Catino and company were shocked to find that Zila and Justice had continued playing. Realizing this, they said there was nothing they could do and thus the match went to Zila. This was a huge victory for the sixteen-year-old since it assured him a spot in the Master Division's Top 8.

The second controversy occurred before the quarterfinal round on Sunday. An error was found on George Baxter's decklist; where he had listed Feldon's Cane, he actually put Kjeldoran Outpost in the deck. A similar miscue had occurred once before with Baxter, during last May's Pro Tour–Los Angeles, when he forgot to list a critical Fireball in his decklist. The judges decided to let him play with an extra Cane and also docked him one game in his best-of-three-games match, which meant he needed to sweep Indiana's Chris Pikula, his quarterfinal opponent, to advance.

Though he won the first game, he dropped a squeaker in the second, and thus lost the match because of the decklist error. After the match, Baxter was understandably upset because he felt he should have been given the same punishment as Australia's Tom Chanpheng in this year's World Championships, when Chanpheng was forced to play with his deck exactly as listed on his decklist, but wasn't forced to forfeit a game.

The final controversy took place during the finals of the Junior Championships *(pictured above)*. At the close of the fifth and deciding duel, Jeremy Baca of Texas was looking through his deck and realized he had Adakar Wastes in it, even though he was playing an all-white deck. He figured out that Adakar Wastes must have come from Justin Schneider, his final-round opponent's deck. Baca recalled that Schneider had cast Political Trickery in an earlier game on one of Baca's Kjeldoran Outposts and exchanged an Adakar Wastes for it. After the game, they forgot to switch the two lands, thus leaving Schneider with five Outposts and Baca with an Adakar Wastes. Since the judges weren't able to determine in which game the switch took place—and since it is the player's responsibility to make sure he or she gets all of his or her cards back after each game—they let the match stand and Schneider was declared champion.

Speaking of Schneider, the Stromgald Spy overheard that he was literally handed his deck by Virginia's Mike Long minutes before the first round on Saturday. Long had played with the deck for quite some time, but decided to go with another deck combination at the last minute, thereby freeing it up for Schneider during the Juniors competition.

The latest team news has a few of SMK Collectible's (out of Massachusetts) heavyweights leaving to form a new team dubbing itself "The Brain Trust." Darwin Kastle and David Humpherys headline the new team, along with Robert Dougherty, Michelle Bush, and Adam Green. Said Kastle, "SMK was sponsoring so many people that the sponsorship money was becoming minimal at best, so I got a better offer now." The new team is sponsored by Your Move Games.

Pro Tour Tidbits (following up previous rumors):

• Bertrand Lestrée of France competed at Pro Tour–Dallas, thus disproving previous rumors of his possible retirement. Word on the street is that Lestrée doesn't care for Limited environments, so he'll only be attending those Pro Tour events using Constructed formats.

• New York's Sean Fleischman, who sported his famous feathered hat back in Atlanta, has mentioned that he's once again retiring the headwear.

• The much anticipated Nate Clark/Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz showdown didn't take place in Big D as was expected, most likely due to Clark's early disqualification from the tournament.

The Stromgald Spy is interested in hearing any juicy rumors, hot controversies, or titillating news. If you have anything to share, don't hesitate to call (206) 226-6500, send email to <woofer@wizards.com>, or flag me down at one of the Pro Tour events. Here's looking forward to seeing everybody at Pro Tour–Los Angeles aboard the Queen Mary in late February!

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BY ANDY COLLINS

Arena League News

Exploring the Tropical Mysteries of Mirage

On January 3, 1997, Arena—The League for **Magic: The Gathering** began its Winter Season. At approximately a thousand stores across the United States and Canada, players are now dueling with decks constructed entirely from cards appearing in *Mirage*, the exciting new stand-alone expansion for **Magic**. Though exact numbers were not available at the time of this writing, it's estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 players are participating in the league. Here's a sampling of the feedback Arena has received from both retailers and players—specifically about the Autumn Season, which featured the Continuous Draft format:

• "I'd have to say that Arena is the best competition that Wizards of the Coast has ever put together."

—Michelle Bayless, Bourbon St. Comics Inc., Tampa, Florida

• "We have players coming in from almost fifty miles away just to play in Arena. We've been staying open late just so our players can get their matches in."

—Laurie Butler, Card Collector's Corner, Fort Wayne, Indiana

• "Arena is awesome. How the decks change in Continuous Draft is just incredible."

—Matthew Lent, Wizards Guild V, Clifton Park, New York

• "My deck concept and colors changed every match; what a wild experience!"

—Kevin Stioff, The Magical Lizard, Pickney, Michigan

• "The players are having more fun than they've had in a long, long time."

—T. J. Tipton, Cosmic Comics, Bellingham, Washington

So, if you haven't given Arena a try, now is your chance! All areas of the United States and Canada are eligible to participate in the league, so talk to your local **Magic** retailer today about joining Arena for the Tempest Season, which begins on February 21 (and features *Mirage-Visions* Constructed format).

Other League News

Four lucky Arena players won invitations to Pro Tour–Dallas by winning Arena Pro Tour Qualifiers the weekend of November 2–3, 1996. The four players were Jay Luo (Dunwoody, GA), who finished 53rd at Pro Tour–Dallas; Ken Wallach (Deerfield, IL, 63rd); Tim Stoltzfus (Cedar Hill, TX, 127th); and James Ridgway (Charlottesville, VA, 131st). These players were joined in Dallas by Igor Frayman (Los Angeles, CA, 42nd) and Jim Lemire (Southboro, MA, 137th), who both won Arena Pro Tour Qualifiers at the end of the Summer Season. Congratulations to all of these players!

Also, by the time you read this, hundreds of Arena judges have received the first of their rewards for being part of the league. Approximately 200 hundred judges, each of whom had judged at least 100 Arena league matches, were sent Arena judge T-shirts bearing either Vesuvan Doppleganger, Armageddon Clock, or Nightmare artwork. In addition, several judges who had judged at least 300 Arena matches will receive an Arena judge T-shirt bearing Arena's alternative Disenchant artwork, illustrated by Kevin McCann. More rewards are in the works; visit Arena's website, `http://www.wizards.com/Arena`, for more information.

Finally, to help Arena retailers provide recognition to their top players, Arena has created a special "perpetual plaque." The plaque measures approximately 13" x 20" and has enough room to engrave the names of the Top 3 players from each league season. In addition, two other plaques are available to retailers who wish to design their own awards (such as "Most Inspirational Player"). Your Arena retailer has more information about this special offer; be sure to let your retailer know you'd like to see your name up on his or her wall!

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